the Skeptical Inquirer

Gerard Croiset: The Case of the Claimed Clairvoyant Detective

Horoscope Inaccuracy / Planets and Radio Disturbance / Psychic Hucksters Bermuda Triangle 1981 Style

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THE ZETETIC

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Cover photograph of Gerard Croiset courtesy of *De Telegraaf*, Amsterdam.

Critiques on the Fringes of Science

It is hard to believe that we have already completed five full years of publication of the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER. The first two years we published semiannually; the last three, quarterly. It all adds up to a rich and virtually unprecedented assortment of critiques, analyses, evaluations, and investigations of paranormal and fringe-science claims and exploration of the issues surrounding them.

We've had the generous cooperation of able scientists, scholars, investigators, and writers around the world in what we continue to think is a needed and worthwhile effort to provide responsible analysis in response to sensationalized claims. We thank everyone who has contributed his or her time, effort, and skill. That includes you, the reader. We are all partners in this effort. This is a highly cooperative activity, and you have proved to be a valuable source of information and feedback. We continue to welcome your assistance, support, and criticisms.

Rather than look back as we begin our sixth year, we want to look forward. We pledge to continue to provide timely, lively, and well-informed perspectives on the entire panoply of paranormal and fringe-science claims. We are involved in this effort out of respect for intellectual honesty as much as for any other reason. Such a concern sometimes seems noticeably out of fashion. But we are optimistic enough to believe there is a considerable share of the population who values integrity and hungers for high-quality, high-reliability information with which to form judgments—in this case concerning subjects where our natural fascination with the bizarre often overpowers the built-in processes that in other areas help us select fact from fiction and the probably real from the probably unreal.

* * * * *

This issue of the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER is an excellent one to begin our sixth year. You will find solid articles on subjects we haven't addressed substantively before, beginning with investigative journalist Piet Hein Hoebens's inquiry into the truth behind the claims surrounding the famed Dutch "clairvoyant" Gerard Croiset, who among other things is a supposed "psychic body finder," like those being given so much publicity in the United States recently. Our Winter issue will have more disclosures.

* * * * *

One of the criticisms frequently directed at those of us involved in the critical (i.e., in the sense of using one's critical intelligence) examination of such claims is that we are "negative" thinkers, obsessed with debunking. I reject that complaint. Almost everyone involved in these efforts is also in some way working to explore or chronicle the exciting frontiers of science,

pushing at the limits of nature's boundless mysteries. If you look over the roster of persons associated with CSICOP, you'll find some of the more imaginative and wide-ranging minds of our time. As for me, I find the newly discovered real wonders of nature that I am privileged to learn and write about as a science journalist awesome and inspiring—far more so than the puny kinds of concocted mysteries we often have to deal with in these pages. Most of us *are* involved with the advances of science and the endless mysteries of the universe and the mind in our other work.

We realize that much of the popular interest in the paranormal is a positive quest for mystery and significance in a complex and uncertain world. When we are negative, it is because that is where the weight of the evidence often rests when it is honestly examined. If nature doesn't always seem to work the way so many people wish it did, or in the way so many devotees of the paranormal claim without suitable substantiation that it does, it is not the fault of those of us who find it our lot—in the name of accuracy and honesty—to point that out. I think each of us will, as the true spirit of science dictates, willingly revise any of our judgments on any of the matters we examine, if the evidence is compelling. That is all that is necessary to change views in science (it happens all the time): show the evidence and have it stand up under rigorous examination.

* * * * *

Nevertheless, many, perhaps most, persons are less interested in evidence than in belief. All of us involved in evaluating paranormal and fringe-science claims probably should be more aware of the human need for supportive belief systems and the immense power of belief in shaping perceptions and judgments. To accept the role that unexamined belief plays in society is not to justify irrationality but is only the rational act of accepting the world as it is. Belief systems provide a cohesion and structure to the lives of persons in most cultures. The appeal of comforting belief makes it impossible ever to eliminate pseudoscience, fringe-science, and superstition.

It is probably wisest for us to take a philosophical and compassionate view of the innate human need for supportive belief systems. At the same time we can aggressively continue to explore the wonderful and exciting frontiers of the natural universe. And for those who wish to base their beliefs on verified facts and a reasonably realistic view of things—especially important in today's world—we will continue to examine and critique, and correct misconceptions and distortions that may arise, about all scientifically testable matters on the fringes of science and in the murky quicksand of the paranormal.

Intellectual honesty, if nothing else, demands it. Besides, it is interesting.

—Kendrick Frazier, *Editor*

News and Comment

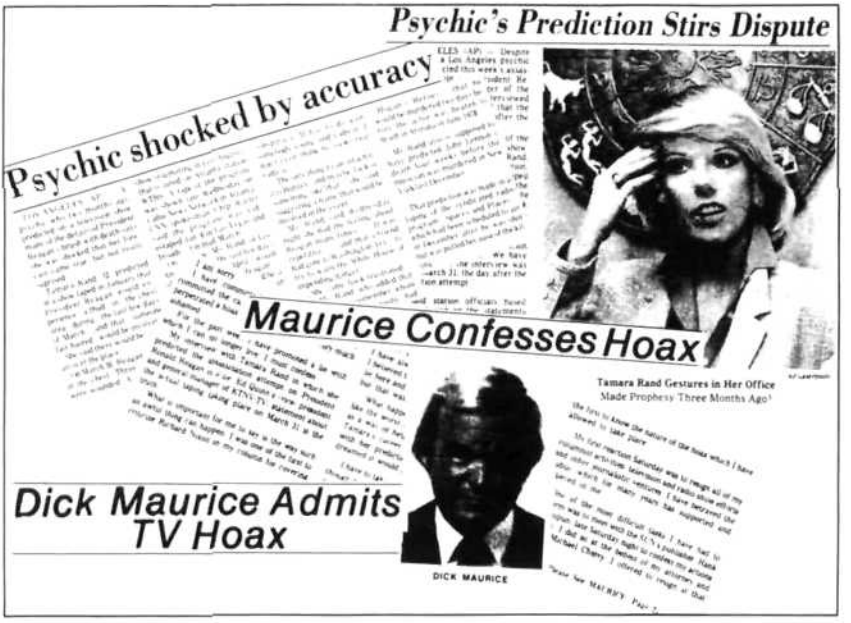
Prediction After the Fact: Lessons of the Tamara Rand Hoax

The Tamara Rand psychic prediction hoax has faded from memory, but the lessons the incident provides for the public and the news and entertainment media should not be forgotten. Nor should it be overlooked that CSICOP had a hand in helping to expose the hoax and to get the TV networks to issue retractions. Rand's transgressions in trying to put herself across as a psychic and to capitalize on a tragic national event varied from those of other self-proclaimed "psychics" only in blatancy and degree. For those who have followed the tactics of such persons, the only surprises were the swiftness and boldness with which her plan was carried out and its equally quick collapse and public exposure.

On the morning of April 2, 1981, you will remember—four days after the assassination attempt on President Reagan in Washington—the NBC-TV "Today" show and ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" joined the Cable News Network in broadcasting a tape that was claimed to have been made on January 6, 1981, by Rand, a noted Los Angeles "psychic" who makes a handsome living by advising movie stars whether or not to sign contracts. On that videotape, viewers saw and heard Rand predict that Reagan would be shot in the chest area by a sandy-haired young man from a wealthy family. The assailant, said Rand, would have the initials, "J.H.," first name possibly Jack, last name something like "Humley." She foresaw a "hail of bullets" as well. All this was to take place during the last week of March or the first week of April.

It was an impressive apparent prediction, the kind of thing that can turn a local "psychic" into a world-class celebrity, with the fame and fees that go with that exalted status. Yet to veteran psychic watchers the prediction was too precise. This wasn't a case of after-the-fact reinterpretation of a set of vague and ambiguous statements, the usual stock-in-trade of the breed.

The wire services had already helped broadcast Rand's miracle prediction worldwide, but Paul Simon, an Associated Press reporter in Los Angeles, contacted CSICOP chairman Paul Kurtz in Buffalo. Simon was skeptical about Rand's claims. Kurtz asked whether it was certain the videotape had been prepared before the assassination attempt as claimed and urged that Simon check the time sequence. Simon called Kurtz back several times that day to


Psychic's Prediction Stirs Dispute
Psychic shocked by accuracy
Maurice Confesses Hoax
Dick Maurice Admits TV Hoax
Tamara Rand Gestures in Her Office
Made Prophesy Three Months Ago
DICK MAURICE

report on his investigation. He said he had contacted station personnel at WTBS in Atlanta, Georgia, which Rand claimed had broadcast the tape Saturday night, March 28, two days before the predicted event. They denied that such a tape had been aired. He then called KTNV in Las Vegas, where the tape was said to have been prepared, and technicians there told him that they had taped it on Tuesday night, March 31, more than 24 hours *after* the shooting of Reagan.

Simon said that Arthur Lord, bureau chief in Los Angeles for NBC, admitted that he had accepted the word of the producer of the TV tape and of Tamara Rand and that he had been bamboozled. Unfortunately, at the same time, NBC-TV officials in Los Angeles were telling the press that they "stood by every word" of the broadcast. That evening Kurtz sent telegrams on behalf of CSICOP to the "Today" show (NBC) and to "Good Morning America" (ABC) requesting that they retract the "prediction" story since all the evidence pointed toward a hoax.

The next morning, April 3, early viewers of the NBC-TV "Today" show were startled to hear host Jane Pauley admit that the Rand affair "may be a hoax" and ABC-TV briefly mentioned that they were "looking into the matter." Amazingly, even though Simon's story and other wire service and newspaper articles were now labeling the incident a hoax, the ABC-TV "Telenews" program, broadcast that evening on ABC affiliates across the country, told the Tamara Rand story again as if it were true. Kurtz sent another telegram of protest, and there was a subsequent retraction. The following Monday, NBC devoted a substantial segment of the "Today" show to the hoax.

Fortunately, most of the network programs did eventually acknowledge that the affair had been a hoax and that they had fallen for it.

The *coup de grâce* arrived when Dick Maurice, host of the faked TV show, who had maintained the prediction was genuine, finally admitted that

it was an outright hoax. In a front-page column in the *Las Vegas Sun* on April 5, Maurice proclaimed:

"I am sorry.

"I have committed a terrible wrong. I have committed the cardinal sin of a columnist. I have perpetrated a hoax on the public and feel very much ashamed.

"My interview with Tamara Rand in which she predicted the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan is a lie. Ed Quinn's (vice president and general manager of KTNV-TV) statement about the actual taping taking place on March 31 is the truth."

Maurice said he had gone along with the plan as a favor to Rand, a friend whose career as a psychic they both were sure would be advanced by the publicity about such a spectacularly successful "prediction." Maurice resigned all of his columnist, television, and radio-show efforts. (The newspaper publisher didn't accept the resignation, saying he didn't believe in kicking a man who was down.) In late May, in an appearance on Tom Synder's "Tomorrow Coast to Coast" show (dealing with journalistic malfeasance), Maurice said that as a result of the incident he had "lost everything," including his house, and had for a time seriously contemplated suicide.

Rand, despite it all, gained worldwide publicity in a game in which notoriety is nearly as good as deserved fame. There is little doubt she will bounce back and continue in the psychic-prediction business and will be as strong as ever, now a pitied victim of those dreadful skeptics, her hoax forgiven as an isolated and temporary aberration from *real* "psychic" predicting.

The most important question is how such a thing could happen in the first place? Her claimed prediction was newsworthy, but why was it so readily aired nationally, before any independent checks could be made into its authenticity? A large part of the answer lies in the widespread credulous acceptance by much of the public and the media of the possibility of psychic wonders. Without that gullible mind-set, it is difficult to see how Rand's claim could have failed to raise all sorts of red flags to the gate-keepers of the media. None of it would be possible if much of the press and public didn't believe such claims and predictions were possible.

The radio and TV talk-shows, the supermarket tabloids, and even the legitimate news media have credulously disseminated the claims of legions of psychics so often that it is easy for everyone to believe there are such things as real psychics. Yet all the evidence points to this fact: There are no such people as psychics; there are only people who claim to be psychic. And, we might add, the other necessary ingredient in the equation is an army of people willing to believe in psychic miracles.

The Tamara Rand hoax came shortly before the case of the award of a Pulitzer Prize to a young *Washington Post* reporter for a sensational article that turned out to have been fabricated. That incident unleashed an admirable round of intense soul-searching among responsible reporters and editors. Important journalistic issues were raised and freshly aired, among them the role of editors in striving to ensure the truth and accuracy of what their publications print. The public saw honest journalists wrestling with complex questions of responsibility and ethics.

Unfortunately, psychic claims seem to be treated entirely differently. Certainly the community of "psychics" has no ethical standards to discuss or uphold, since their business is based on deception in the first place. TV and radio talk-shows conveniently classify themselves as entertainment rather than news media, thus neatly skirting most ethical responsibilities to strive for the

truth. In a revealing statement on the "Tomorrow" show, Maurice said he often had as many as three psychics a week appearing on his TV talk-show. Until radio, television, and newspapers openly challenge the claims of "psychics" —or, if not that, decide not to give them a ready forum—the abuses of the truth and the exploitation of the public's interest in, and gullibility over, "psychic" miracles will continue.

—Kendrick Frazier and James Randi

The Lake Champlain monster surfaces

A new monster of the deep, nicknamed "Champ," has surfaced, according to a recently published photograph. The photo was allegedly taken on Lake Champlain in July 1977 by Sandra Mansi. It was released to the press only recently, four years later. I first heard of it when I was called by Fred Golden, science editor of *Time*, who asked me what I thought of this "sea monster." He said that an agent was retained by the Mansis and that they were asking *Time* for $25,000 for permission to reprint the color photo. (They later came down to $1,500.) Although the science editors were very skeptical of its authenticity, *Time* printed the photo with a brief story in its People section (July 13, 1981).

In investigating Champ, I questioned several people. The story is that the Mansis were driving along the Lake Champlain shore (north of St. Albans, Vermont) and stopped to swim; they can't remember where. Sandra Mansi was showing her husband-to-be the countryside where she grew up. While perched on a bank, she said, they saw something suddenly rear its head five or six feet out of the water, and then a hump appeared. Mrs. Mansi ran back to the car to get her Kodak Instamatic and took a picture. The left the scene, somewhat shaken by the incident, and forgot about it until they began to hear stories about other sightings. It was then that they began to circulate the photo. The photo, not the negative, was analyzed by Professor B. Roy Frieden at the University of Arizona, who said: "We don't see any evidence of tampering with the photo." Dr. Roy P. Mackal of the University of Chicago was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying that the Loch Ness and Lake Champlain monsters may be "some kind of rare elusive mammal, probably related to the zeuglodon," which is thought to have been extinct for 20 million years.

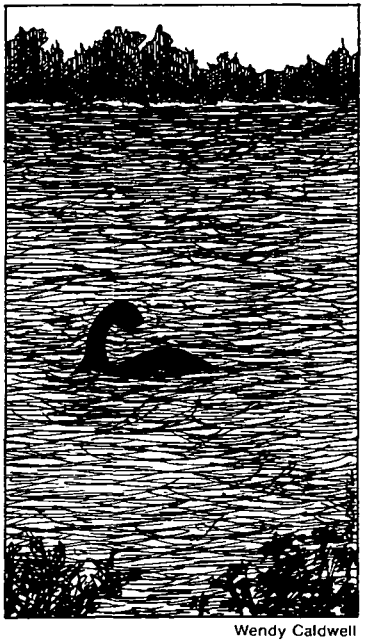
I spoke by phone with Joe Zarynkski, a Saratoga Springs schoolteacher, who has an avid interest in lake monsters and has been working ex-

tensively with the Mansis on this case. He has been to Loch Ness five times and is convinced that Champ and Nessie are the same. He says that he has assembled reports of 132 sightings of Champ, going back to the nineteenth century.

I also talked with Philip Reines, professor of communications at SUNY College at Plattsburgh, New York, whom the Mansis had contacted first. He read a transcript to me of their initial statement to him. Reines said that he was skeptical about the photo. First, because the Mansis couldn't locate the site where they took it, and, second, because they had lost the negative.

Professor Reines, told me, however, that he is convinced that Champ exists. He also has been collecting stories for several years. He said that Lake Champlain has at least three types of strange creatures: (1) large sturgeon up to 20 feet long that hover in the deep and are rarely seen, (2) eels 10 feet long, and (3) the Lake Champlain monster—a creature with a long neck, a hump, and a "horselike face."

Drawing based on the Mansi photograph.



Wendy Caldwell

Although he has never sighted one himself, he has spoken to many people who have. "Perhaps 99 percent of such sightings were not genuine," he said. They were either due to "misidentification, hoaxes, or hallucination." Nevertheless, he considers 1 percent genuine.

Much of this sounds familiar to those who have been investigating Bigfoot and UFO sightings based upon alleged eyewitness accounts but difficult to corroborate by independent evidence. Although it is improbable that such a species exists, one cannot, of course, rule it out a priori.

I showed the published photo of Champ to a colleague at SUNY at Buffalo, Professor Ed Morgan of the Biology Department. He said it looked much like a loon to him—a bird common to that area. It is difficult to judge from the photo how far away or how large the object was. Others have said that it might have been a floating log or even an inflated rubber duck (there seems to be a sandbar to the left of it). Dr. W. H. Lehn of the University of Manitoba has suggested that some of the sightings could be due to atmospheric distortions: light refraction caused by temperature inversion. Others point out that for such a monster to exist there would have to be a breeding population of at least 20 or 30. None have been caught in a net; nor are there any bones or other remains that have been identified. Barnum once offered $50,000 for the carcass of one, with no takers. What is certain, however, is that the Champlain sea-monster—reminiscent of Indian folklore—has now been given a new lease on life by the Mansi photograph and the many stories about it in the press.

—*Paul Kurtz*

Attitudes on Bigfoot and Nessie

Physical anthropologists are basically very skeptical about the possibility of the existence of both the supposed Bigfoot (Sasquatch) creature of Northwest America and an unknown marine animal inhabiting Loch Ness in Scotland, according to a recently published survey.

Only 13 percent of the anthropologists responding felt that reports of Bigfoot were due to living animals "still unknown to science." Thirty-six percent attributed the reports to misidentification of ordinary animals, and 74 percent attributed them to imagination, hoaxes, and myths (Some answered in more than one of the three categories.)

The physical anthropologists felt a little more favorable toward the possibility of Nessie: 33 percent felt the reports at Loch Ness were due to living animals "still unknown to science"; 37 percent attributed them to ordinary animals misidentified; and 57 percent to imagination, hoaxes, and myths.

The survey also determined the reasons for the respondents' rejection of Bigfoot and Nessie reports. For Bigfoot, 74 percent mentioned the lack of specimens, 62 percent the lack of bones, 46 percent the lack of any fossil evidence, and 36 percent felt that a Bigfoot creature could not have remained so long undetected by science.

The reasons for rejecting Nessie reports were fairly similar, except that less importance was given to the lack of fossil evidence and more importance (23 percent) to the lack of necessary nutritional resources in Loch Ness.

One other contrast between views about the two hypothesized creatures involved the effect any future verification of their existence would have on science. Fifty-seven percent felt a discovery of Bigfoot would have a "severe" impact on science; 34 percent, a "moderate" effect; and 9 percent, a "slight" impact. For Nessie, the figures were: "severe," 3.3 percent; "moderate," 37 percent; and "slight," 60 percent.

The survey of 69 physical anthropologist respondents (of 100 sent questionnaires) was conducted by J. Richard Greenwell and James E. King of the Department of Psychology at the University of Arizona and was reported in the February 1981 *Current Anthropology*.

"We can conclude that there is far more skepticism about the existence of Bigfoot among physical anthropologists than there is about the existence of Nessie, although the existence of both is strongly doubted," they conclude. "Because of the lack of physical evidence, a large majority believe that Bigfoot reports are a result of imagination, hoaxes, myths, or misidentifications, although they seem to bend over backward to support scientific investigation of the topic, provided federal funds are not involved."

—*K.F.*

A psychic encounter

As a result of a nationally distributed magazine article, I was contacted during April 1981 by more than forty radio stations wanting to conduct interviews by phone, most of them "live." One of these, over WCAU in Philadelphia on April 24, deserves recounting to demonstrate the techniques employed by "psychics" doing readings. The show's host had reached me well in advance to prepare for handling the visiting psychic, and did quite a good job.

I will pass by the body of the interview; and describe only the actual reading, given after one psychic, Maria Strimber, had failed a test that host John Stupek and I designed for her.

Stupek prepared 19 drawings (one was thrown out at the last minute as being unsuitable) and selected three of them, unseen, to be sealed up separately. Three more, which Stupek did see, were similarly sealed up. A master chart of all 19 originals was shown to the psychic, and she was asked to guess the concealed ones. Thus, the first three would constitute a clairvoyance test, and the second three a test of telepathy. She failed all six, but valiantly tried to save the series by pointing out that one drawing that she had incorrectly named as a target twice in the first set of three did turn out actually to be a target in the second set, though incorrectly called at that time, too.

To save the performance, she said she would do a reading for the host. Her reading follows.

PSYCHIC: Now, I'm going to only tell you yes-or-no questions. The number eight could have something important in your life. (pause) Also the number three. (pause) Is the number eight important in your life? (pause) Is it your birthday?

HOST: No.

PSYCHIC: The birthday of someone close?

HOST: No.

PSYCHIC: I see two children close to you.

HOST: I have no children.

PSYCHIC: I see the month of August. (pause) I see money coming to you at about the same time. Do you have a brother? (no answer, though possibly a nod, unheard) I see two people close to you, one man, one woman. (pause) Do you have a specific wish in mind?

HOST: Ummm, yes. I have a specific wish.

PSYCHIC: I see a trip by June. Is there a brown-haired man, about six-feet tall?

HOST: No.

PSYCHIC: Is there a light-haired woman in your life?

HOST: Yes, that's my wife.

PSYCHIC: She's not as tall?

HOST: No.

PSYCHIC: About five feet, four?

HOST: No.

PSYCHIC: You will make a trip with her.

HOST: When?

PSYCHIC: In May or perhaps in June. You're in a position now to apply yourself. (pause) Your wife born in 1946?

HOST: 1945.

PSYCHIC: June important?

HOST: No.

PSYCHIC: I see the number six. What month was your wife born? July?

HOST: We have to close this now. No more time.

And, I might add, no more talent. Any reader, going over this reading, will recognize the methods. The problem for the psychic is that unlike most readings this one was recorded and later analyzed. She tried the numbers three six, and eight. She tried for relatives, children, and others—and missed. The host, who is tall, very probably has a shorter wife, so we give no points there. This is a very *typical* reading of a very renowned psychic operator. She is no amateur. But—and this is important—she evidently really believes she has the power to perform readings. Otherwise, she would have researched her subject, since she knew well in advance that she would be on the program.

—James Randi

Life at the Enquirer

Working for the *National Enquirer* can be a rather tenuous situation, reported

ex-staffer John T. Miller, in a conversation with CSICOP member James Randi. You have to come up with the story they want, he said, or they'll find someone who can. One of the problems was that the *Enquirer* brass constantly demanded photos to illustrate the wilder stories. "You can make up words, but photos are a lot harder," confessed Miller.

During his four-and-a-half years reporting for that paper, Miller ran into a lot of self-proclaimed psychics whom the *Enquirer* was fond of. Jeane Dixon, then under exclusive contract to the periodical, would throw up her hands in astonishment when told of her latest predictions, invented by the writing staff. "Did *I* say *that*?" she would exclaim.

Shawn Robbins, another "seer" that Miller dealt with, asked him outright whether or not he believed in psychic matters. Though he tried to be diplomatic, Miller gave the distinct impression that he did not believe, and between alternating beers and Tabs, Robbins admitted to him that she didn't either. "I'm only in it for the money," she asserted. Miller dealt with her during the time she was trying to take credit for predicting the Tenerife Pan Am/KLM collision, one of the prophecies the *Enquirer* credited to several of their pet performers. The reporter had to say that he held a certain admiration for Robbins. "She was right up front about it, at least with me."

Said Miller, "It wouldn't be so bad if the management there took it all tongue-in-cheek. But I really think they take their work seriously, just as if it were real journalism." Now well out of that job, John Miller looks back on it with mixed feelings. "It was an expensive way to learn the business," he says, "and I could have done it less painfully. But the money was three times what anyone else is paying ..."

Tsunamis, psychic confabs, and Australia's Bent Spoon

The newly formed Australian section of CSICOP, the Australian Skeptics, has published the first issue of its newsletter, *The Skeptic*, a lively compendium of activities and critiques exposing various austral follies.

It notes, for instance, that a self-proclaimed clairvoyant named Joseph Gyapai had made a highly publicized prediction in January that on February 9, 1981, a giant wall of water 17 meters high would sweep the city of Perth out to sea, along with various other western Australian towns. Public fears prompted the scientist in charge of the Perth Geophysical Observatory to issue a statement decrying the prediction and allaying concern. *The Skeptic* notes that when no immediate word came about the Perth cataclysm on the predicted day, some smelled a media and government coverup. "However," it reports, "we can now reveal that our research has shown that Perth is still

SKEPTICS TEST
PSYCHIC SURGEON
the Skeptic
DORIS STOKES WRONG
– POLICE

there."

It also reports that claims made in Australia by a woman who said she had psychically solved two murder cases in England and had had a "psychic conversation" with a murder victim in Los Angeles were all balderdash, according to relevant police officials in the two cities. In the latter case, all the details disclosed in the "psychic conversation" had previously been published in the news media.

The Skeptic reports on the group's test of a supposed psychic surgeon (see *SI*, Summer 1981, p. 11), has an interesting article on a case of mass hysteria among 80 schoolchildren in Victoria in June 1980, and announces that it has challenged the Australian branch of the International Meditation Society (previously active in New Zealand; see *SI*, Winter 1979-80) to demonstrate its claims to teach people to levitate (for $5,000).

The Skeptic also announces the Golden Bent Spoon Award competition to "honor" various people in Australia who say and do the silliest things concerning the paranormal. Contestants are already abundant, it reports. For instance, for the award to the gullible politician most easily taken in by claims of the paranormal, "Australian Premier Joe Bjelke-Peterson's continuing support for the water-powered nuclear fusion Horvath car may prove hard to beat."

—*K.F.*

Australian trade commission upholds bio-calculators

The Australian Skeptics, the Australian section of CSICOP, lodged a formal complaint with the Australian Trade Practices Commission about the advertising and sale of a "Biorhythm Computer/Calculator" by a large electronics firm. The group drew the Commission's attention to an advertisement claiming that with the machine you can "calculate past, present and future biorhythms! Chart all cycles and watch for 'critical days.'"

The group sent the Commission four articles from the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER and two papers on biorhythms by Australian scientist Brian Quigley and submitted that there is no evidence for birthdate-based biorhythms, biorhythm cycles, or critical days and a great deal of evidence to suggest that biorhythms do not exist.

Consequently the Australian Skeptics submitted that the advertisement for the Biorhythm Computer/Calculator contravened S-53 (c) of the Trade Practices Act by representing that the item has "performance characteristics" and "uses and benefits" it does not have.

The Trade Practices Commission decided that the advertisement itself was not misleading or deceptive since the calculator does appear to perform a function of biorhythms for those who believe "perhaps misguidedly" in them. The Assistant Commissioner stated that the evidence provided by the Australian Skeptics casts doubt upon the existence of biorhythms but that he had no evidence that the calculator did not perform the functions advertised.

—*Mark Plummer, Chairman*
Australian Skeptics

Canadian symposium on psi

The Canadian section of CSICOP is sponsoring a one-day symposium on "Psychic Phenomena and Natural Explanations" in Toronto in November. Participants and their subjects include York University psychologist James E. Alcock, chairman of the Canadian

section, "The Psychology of Belief"; psychologist and lecturer Angus McDonald, "Fringe Psychology and Psychic Phenomena"; York University lecturer Ann McKenzie, "Parapsychology and Philosophy of Science"; and mentalist/magician Henry A. Gordon, "Extrasensory Deception."

The purpose of the symposium is to provide the public with alternative interpretations of purportedly paranormal phenomena. It will be held beginning at 10 A.M. on November 14, 1981, in the main auditorium at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, 250 College Street, Toronto. Tickets are $5.00 to defray expenses. For registration by mail or for advance information, write to James E. Alcock, Department of Psychology, Glendon College, York University, 2275 Bayville Ave., Toronto. ●

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Psychic Vibrations

What is the latest California fad to be sweeping the psychic salons of the West? "Crystal Awareness—A Highly Intensive Seminar Using the Quartz Rock Crystal." In this two-day intensive seminar, the participant will learn to "cleanse, energize and balance chakras; release past emotional blocks; talk to spirit guides; open and expand healing abilities; and create a crystal generator," all for just $60.

* * * * *

Speaking of California cults, psychologist and necromancer Elisabeth Kübler-Ross has given a long and extremely revealing interview to *Playboy*, published in the May 1981 issue. A brief summary cannot convey the flavor of this amazing piece. Kübler-Ross, once a conventional psychologist, first broke new ground by her studies of the process of dying, then became involved with a California cult, headed by a former sharecropper named Jay Barham, which claims to be in constant communication with the dead. Of Barham, she says: "I have never met anybody with more humility or a greater gift." Others have charged Barham with taking sexual liberties with cult members while masquerading as a spirit. Kübler-Ross claims to have a tape that totally exonerates Barham, but she refused to let the reporter listen to it. She tells of healing one patient as follows: "Through psychic energy alone, we sealed off her brain lesions and made an orifice to discharge the energy from the lesions. . . . You see, Jay is the healer and I am the catalyst for his work." One spirit materialized to tell Kübler-Ross that they had both worked together in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago with Christ; her name was then Isabelle, she relates. On another occasion, she left her body and floated up to the ceiling—"the highlight of my life up to that point."

* * * * *

John P. Oswald, New England UFO investigator affiliated with both MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) and CUFOS (Center for UFO Studies), has written an as yet unpublished thesis titled "UFOs and a Coherent World View." In it, the 40-year-old chemist with an M.S. degree explains that UFOs can best be understood in terms of the "Second Coming of Jesus Christ and His Army of Angels." Oswald charged in an interview in the *New Hampshire Sunday News* that "there is a negative policy on the part of the government toward UFOs" that at the same time subverts Christianity, and for this reason he sent a copy of the manuscript to the Justice Department

in Washington; however, a spokesman for the Justice Department said that a government attorney "found no violation of federal law" in the government's UFO actions. According to Oswald, "an informed and properly reasoned analysis indicates the UFO phenomenon represents a manifestation of an alien intelligent force—literally angels." Oswald sent a copy of his analysis to Dr. J. Allen Hynek of CUFOS. Let us quote precisely from the newspaper: "'I haven't finished my review and for that reason I'll reserve my judgment,' Hynek said, with one exception, that 'Oswald is not a crackpot but a rather sincere investigator.'" Another copy went to Walt Andrus, director of MUFON, who called the work "a scholarly manuscript... one of the most comprehensive studies" he has seen on the subject. Oswald concludes that the force of angels "will assist Christ in assuming control of this planet ... probably in conjunction with a nuclear war."

* * * * *

The Center for Human Development in New Jersey recently put out a press release stating: "Puzzling mental 'signals,' evidently from an intelligent source, have been received over the past three weeks by investigators in Virginia ... The signals consist of a gestalt or overall impressions and a separate 'stream of symbols' that come to mind in the presence of unusual stones... the words 'far' and 'star' keep popping into their heads." On one day the message received was:

*_**___ *_*_**** *_**_*_* *_**_**_
*_*_**** *_*_*__* *_**__*_ _*__**_

Will the first person to figure out the meaning of those transmissions please transmit an appropriate reply?

* * * * *

Rob Pudim

A new and suitably obscure theory on UFOs has emerged from an article in *Fortean Times* by David Fideler and Bob Tarte, titled "Gateways to Mystery." As best we can tell, it has something to do with Pisces, with the Fish God, and with a reported sighting of a fish-shaped UFO. The authors conclude that "whether or not flying saucers are merely the psychic remnants of a dying Fish God is most difficult to say at this time," but after the start of the Age of Aquarius, we will all know for sure.

* * * * *

The *National Examiner* reports that "the Bermuda Triangle is moving towards America." So says Hugh Cochrane, "an expert on Earth's mysterious forces," who explains that "there really seems to be a shift from the Caribbean area of the trianglelike phenomena. There's been a big jump in plane crashes and shipwrecks in the past few years." Alex Tanous, "perhaps the world's foremost expert on the Triangle," conducted a scientific expedition in the area in 1977, which reported, among other things, an

apparition of the physicist Isaac Newton. "This is not a hoax," Tanous insists. "He appeared on board our boat for three days when we were in the middle of the Triangle. It was Newton who told us that the secret of the triangle was based on magnetic energy coming from the ocean floor."

* * * * *

Like father, like son. The Associated Press recently carried a photo of proud papa Uri Geller, spoon-bender extraordinaire, holding his two-month-old son, Daniel. According to Uri, the baby will soon be tested by English scientists to determine whether he can bend metal with his mind.

* * * * *

Les Brown, a Canadian authority on pyramid energy, warns that unchecked pyramid power is positively dangerous. "If a woman who lived in a pyramid got pregnant, the fetus would grow in four months to the size of a normal one at nine months. Of course, it would die," he told the *National Examiner*. Furthermore, the pyramid is "so powerful that if you were in it all the time it would scramble your brain because of its effect on electrical impulses. A person with a pacemaker in his heart would probably have a heart attack and die." Pyramids, says he, can produce cucumbers as big as baseball bats and grasshoppers that are six feet long!

* * * * *

Stock market guru Joseph Granville, whose following is so large that his buy and sell recommendations create havoc in the market, has acquired a new skill—predicting earthquakes. Last December, Granville predicted that, because of the positions of certain planets, a major destructive earthquake of magnitude 8.3 to 8.8 would devastate Los Angeles at 5:31 A.M., April 10, 1981. It didn't happen. (Nothing seems to be going right for poor old Joe—even the stock market had the audacity to rise above the Granville-proclaimed "top.") Granville says that earthquakes are predictable using the same statistical methods he applies to the stock market. However, a spokesman for the U.S. Geological Survey says "this belongs in the same category as psychic predictions—it's nonsense."

—Robert Sheaffer

Gerard Croiset: Investigation of the Mozart of "Psychic Sleuths"—Part I

Critical examination of the evidence surrounding the cases of supposed crime-solving by the celebrated Dutch "clairvoyant" finds extraordinary differences between the claims and the facts.

Piet Hein Hoebens

First of two articles.

The Dutchman Gerard Croiset, who died unexpectedly in July 1980, was undoubtedly one of the psychic superstars of the twentieth century. His mentor, Professor Wilhelm Tenhaeff, has called him the clairvoyant equivalent of Mozart or Beethoven. Tenhaeff's German colleague, Professor Hans Bender, recently admitted that Croiset had been instrumental in transforming his belief in ESP into "an unshakable conviction." The obituaries published in the European press reflected the sensitive's unique reputation. According to the Amsterdam weekly *Elsevier*, the deceased had heralded a "new awareness of cosmic solidarity." The German parascientific monthly *Esotera* ran a cover story lamenting the death of "the clairvoyant who never disappointed." A professor from the papal university delivered the funeral oration.

Croiset's career in the supernatural has been distinguished indeed. According to his biographers, he has solved some of the century's most baffling crimes, traced countless lost objects, and located hundreds of missing persons. His paranormal healing powers are said to have been on the Caycean level. He "excelled" at precognition and is credited with having accurately foretold future events on numerous occasions. Most of his remarkable feats, it is said, were performed under scientific supervision, which supposedly would make Croiset one of the most thoroughly tested sensitives since Mrs. Piper.

Piet Hein Hoebens is an investigative journalist with the leading Dutch daily newspaper De Telegraff *and a member of the Dutch section of CSICOP.*

Gerard Croiset was respectable. Many educated Dutchmen who profess disbelief in ESP have managed to hold the simultaneous conviction that Croiset, for one, was genuine.

This miracle man is the subject of a full-length biography by the American journalist Jack Harrison Pollack, who claims to have spent five years checking and double-checking the psychic's record. Pollack's verdict: "Unbelievable, but true." Unbelievable, indeed. But true?

Psychic Detectives

The practical achievements of Gerard Croiset and other sensitives who claim to assist the police share most of the features of "spontaneous cases."* Such cases typically occur under uncontrolled conditions and are by their very nature unrepeatable. This means that the only evidence we have usually consists of whatever witnesses are able to remember or care to report. Before reaching a verdict, the critical investigator has to address two crucial questions:

1. Are the reports free of omissions, errors, and deliberate distortions?
2. Does whatever remains after the first question has been answered admit no more plausible an explanation than ESP?

The Sources

Studying Croiset has been the virtual monopoly of Wilhelm Heinrich Carl Tenhaeff, the Dutch parapsychologist who in 1953 was appointed to the first chair of psychical research ever to be established at a regular university (Utrecht). Tenhaeff's books and articles constitute the principal source of information on Croiset, whose case may be said to stand or fall with the reliability of his learned mentor. Unfortunately, little of Tenhaeff's work has been translated into English, which leaves Pollack's *Croiset the Clairvoyant* as the main reference in this language. Pollack is a journalist, not a scholar. Yet his biography may be regarded as an authoritative document, since it was written under the personal guidance of Tenhaeff himself. "He indefatigably double-checked the facts in my manuscript," Pollack states in his Acknowledgment.

In Tenhaeff's *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie* (the official journal of the Dutch Society for Psychical Research), the professor has proudly confirmed this. According to Tenhaeff, *Croiset the Clairvoyant* "was written on the basis of information which I supplied and also under my supervision."

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*This article and the one to follow are exclusively concerned with Croiset's activities as a paranormal sleuth. In that role he became best known abroad. About the experiments with him I will have more to say later.

De Telegraaf, Amsterdam

Croiset gained fame as a clairvoyant sleuth.

Police Records

According to Pollack, Croiset won plaudits not just from parapsychologists but from policemen all over the world for his achievements in psychic detection. "I checked documents in case after case in police records," the biographer assures us. I am not quite certain what he means. Most of the documents he refers to must have been in Dutch, and I doubt that he ever familiarized himself with the language. The only Dutch expression I found in the book is the equivalent of "thank you," and even that solitary example contains an error. Presumably, Pollack relied on summaries or translations of the relevant documentation, prepared for him by Tenhaeff and other acquaintances in the Netherlands. He must have felt it was quite safe to do so. After all, his material would be double-checked by a distinguished scholar, a professor at a state university, a pioneer whom the American psychiatrist-parapsychologist Dr. Berthold Eric Schwartz had compared to Copernicus, Freud, and Einstein.

The Boy on the Raft

It is time to take a closer look at one of Croiset's most impressive successes. It is the "Boy on Raft" case, and will be found on pages 106 and 107 of the

Bantam paperback edition of *Croiset the Clairvoyant*. This case has often been mentioned in the psi literature, and Tenhaeff himself has indicated more than once that it is one of the classics.

This is how Pollack reports it (italics added):

> Ten-year-old Dirk Zwenne left his home in the dunes city of Velsen near the North Sea canal on Saturday, August 29, 1953, at about two P.M. to play. When the boy had not returned home by early evening, his parents began to grow uneasy. They telephoned the local police without success. When no trace of the missing boy had been found in two days, Dirk's uncle telephoned Croiset, whose phone number and address in Enschede, 115 miles away, had been given to him by a police superintendent. Among the clairvoyant's *immediate images* was that Dirk had drowned: "I see a *small harbor*, a *small raft* and a little sailboat. The boy was playing on the raft. He slipped and fell into the water. As he fell, his head struck the sailboat and he received *an injury on the left side of his head.* I am very sorry. There was a strong current in the harbor. *The boy's body will be found in a few days in another small harbor which is connected with the first harbor.*" Unhappily, five days after he had disappeared, the body of Dirk Zwenne was found in this second harbor. And, *just as Croiset had seen*, the boy had a wound on the left side of his head. The raft and small sailboat were recovered in the first harbor—again *just as the sensitive had described.* "It is very likely that everything had happened as the paragnost had seen it," summarized Professor Tenhaeff.

This seems a striking case indeed. Oddly enough, until now nobody seems to have thought of comparing this version with a letter that was published in *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie* in 1955 (vol. 23, no. 1/2). It was written by Mr. A. J. Allan, the uncle who had consulted Croiset. From this report (embedded in an article by Tenhaeff) we get an idea of what really happened. On Monday, August 31, Mr. Allan phoned the clairvoyant, who was at that time living in the eastern Dutch town of Enschede. He acted on the advice of Haarlem police superintendent Gorter, who happened to be the second secretary of the Dutch Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and an acquaintance of both Tenhaeff and Croiset.

The sensitive, after having made clear that he knew what the call was about, told the uncle: "You must look near a *gasholder.*"

Allan: "A gasholder?"

Croiset: "Yes. It might be a tank or a boiler or something like that. I see a road and a small ditch. I also see a small bridge and a small water. Do I speak to the boy's father?"

Allan: "No, you are speaking to an uncle."

Croiset: "All right, I can speak freely. The child has drowned. He is dead. I also see a jetty and a rowing boat or something like that. That's where the body must be."

Allan: "Could it be the North Sea canal?"

Croiset: "No, that is too broad. I don't see so much water."

Allan: "Then where is it?"

Croiset: "I don't know Velsen, but you have to look near that gasholder or tank. It is to the right of it. *To know for sure I ought to come to Velsen.* Call me again if that's necessary."

End of conversation.

Holland being a country full of roads, ditches, small bridges, small waters, jetties, rowboats, and objects that could be described as gasholders, tanks, boilers, or "something like that," Croiset's impressions had hardly been specific. His description could apply to any number of locations.

According to Mr. Allan, the police, "after having considered several possibilities," decided that Croiset must have "seen" a small harbor near a water purification plant. This is a rather surprising interpretation, as that "harbor" (really a recess) is *part of the North Sea canal.* The psychic had been specific on only one point: the water was *not* the North Sea canal. To me, this strongly suggests that the police had reasons of their own to regard the small harbor as a likely place.

The police decided to drag the harbor the next day. On Tuesday, they heard that Dirk, shortly before disappearing, had told one of his friends about "having found a nice raft."

Croiset, who was phoned again later that day, *now started to receive impressions of a raft also.* Mr. Allan suggests that this was due to telepathy, but the skeptical reader may be able to think of a more naturalistic explanation.

Nothing was found in the small harbor, and the next day Allan asked Croiset to come to Velsen. The clairvoyant arrived that same evening, in the company of Tenhaeff.

The psychic was taken to the small harbor, and there he started to get "strong emotions." He stated that the boy had been playing with his raft, had lost his balance, and had bumped his head on a hard object. "According to him [Croiset] *this had been fatal,*" Allan notes. Croiset predicted the body would *not be found before Monday, September 7, or Tuesday the 8th,* and would show an injury *"on the left side of the forehead."* The clairvoyant was then taken to a second small harbor that also forms part of the North Sea canal. *There, however, he felt "no emotions."*

The next morning, Thursday, September 3, the body of Dirk Zwenne was found in the canal near the entrance of the second harbor. The head showed bruises, *but not at the location Croiset had indicated.* Where and in what circumstances the boy had fallen into the water appears never to have been ascertained.

Now please compare this long and tedious story with Pollack's "summary" and be surprised at the magical metamorphosis an entirely unspectacular event has undergone in the process of summarizing. Croiset's impressions had been vague and for the most part wide of the mark, and yet this case is cited as a classic instance of successful psychic detection.

How could this fantastic distortion ever have survived the checking and double-checking by an experienced American journalist and a distinguished university professor? The answer to this question may contain the key to much of the Croiset mystery. For it was Tenhaeff himself who concocted the fake version. Having published Allan's account in his *Tijdschrift*, destined for the home market, the professor prepared a special version for export.

All Pollack had to do was to paraphrase the version Tenhaeff had already published in German (*Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1958) and in English (*Proceedings of the Parapsychological Institute of the State University of Utrecht*, no. 1, December 1960). This latter version reads as follows:

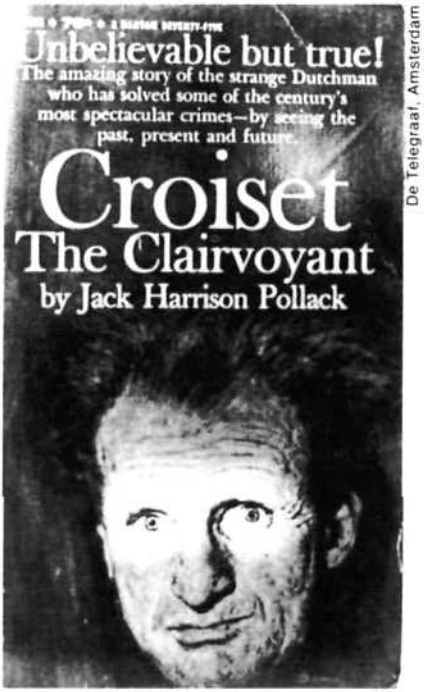
> When no trace of the child had been found by 31st August an uncle of the missing child rang up Mr. Alpha [Croiset's code name], whose name and address he had obtained from a police superintendent. According to the paragnost the child had drowned. Among the "pictures" which presented themselves to Mr. Alpha were a few *which concerned a small harbour.* In this small harbour he "saw" a *small raft* and a *little sailing boat.* According to the paragnost the child had been playing on the raft. He supposed him while at play to have slipped and to have fallen into the water. In doing so he appeared to have incurred *a wound on the left side of the head* where he struck the sailing boat as he fell. *In consequence of a current in the harbour, so the paragnost said, the body would be found in another small harbour which was connected with the first. On 3rd September, just as the paragnost had "seen,"* the body of Dirk Zwenne was *in fact* found in the second harbor with a wound on the left side of his head. [Italics added.]

On all essential points, this version is identical to Pollack's. In this form, the "Boy on Raft" case has become the "believer's favorite." It was featured in the cover story devoted to Croiset in the September 1979 *Holland Herald* (an English-language magazine mainly concerned with "selling" the Netherlands) and found its way into Ryzl's *Parapsychology: A Scientific Approach* and numerous other publications. It is clear that in this case, Professor Tenhaeff "cooked the books." His probable reasons for doing so will be discussed later.

Pollack as a Witness

Jack Harrison Pollack can hardly be blamed for the serious errors in his report of the "Boy on Raft" case. A journalist may be forgiven for accepting a university professor's word, but he must be held responsible for his reports of what he claims he personally witnessed.

In *This Week* of February 19, 1961 (a slightly elaborated version will be found on pp. 25-26 of the paperback edition of the biography), Pollack recalled being present when, on May 21, 1960, Croiset was phoned by a


Unbelievable but true!
The amazing story of the strange Dutchman who has solved some of the century's most spectacular crimes—by seeing the past, present and future.
Croiset
The Clairvoyant
by Jack Harrison Pollack

De Telegraaf, Amsterdam

Pollack's book on Croiset.

De Telegraaf, Amsterdam

Professor W. H. C. Tenhaeff considered Croiset genuine.

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neighbor of an Eindhoven family whose four-year-old son had been missing for 24 hours. According to the article, the police "*had no clues.*"

"The outlook isn't good," Croiset is quoted as saying. "Search the area immediately. But I'm afraid in about three days the child's body will be found in the canal close to the bridge."

Pollack continues: "Three days later, I checked up. The police of Eindhoven had just found the child's body next to one of the piers of the bridge over the canal—exactly as Croiset had predicted."

Something seems to have gone wrong when Pollack checked up. In 1981, I made inquiries with the Eindhoven police. Mr. W. Jongsma of the Information Office kindly offered to check the original police report. These are the real facts: The victim, three-year-old Anthonius Thonen, while playing with a friend, fell into the Dommel River on May 20. The accident was witnessed by the other boy, who told Anthonius's mother about it when she came looking for him. Mrs. Thoonen saw something floating on the water. Presumably, this was the body. It had disappeared when the police arrived. On May 23 (two days after the telephone conversation), Anthonius's remains were found in the river, near the Gessel playground.

The police report does not mention Croiset. Neither does it mention a

bridge. (There are so many bridges over the Dommel that there is always one nearby.)

The authorities from the very beginning knew that the boy had drowned in the river. Pollack's claim that the police "had no clues" is utterly misleading. No one needed a clairvoyant to say that "the outlook isn't good" or that the area should be searched immediately. Yet, by overlooking some crucial facts, Pollack is able to present this case as "an amazing demonstration."

Search for a Child

Pollack's book and numerous other English-language publications convey the impression that psychics are employed as a matter of course in Dutch police investigations. Some journalists seem to think that a special hot-line connects Tenhaeff's office with police headquarters in every major town. Perhaps the language barrier may have been responsible for this exaggeration. In fact, Dutch police authorities tend to be skeptical of clairvoyants. Their typical reply to questions about Croiset is something to the effect that ESP may exist but Croiset was never of any use to them. However, there are a few exceptions.

Notable among the exceptions is a report by Inspector G. D. H. van Woudenberg, published in *Algemeen Politieblad* (no. 13, 1964, pp. 297-300). Van Woudenberg, at that time serving with the Voorburg police, relates an apparent success Croiset achieved in searching for the body of six-year-old Wim Slee. The child was reported missing on April 11, 1963. A thorough search was organized the same day. A police dog led the way to a certain spot on the bank of a canal locally known as De Vliet. There were good reasons to assume the dog was right, as it was known that Wim often went there to play. No body was found, however. The next day the case was mentioned in the press and on radio and television. A number of psychics volunteered with perfectly worthless information. In the meantime, an uncle had rung Croiset's phone number, to be told that the psychic had gone abroad. The uncle did not get through to Croiset until the 16th. The clairvoyant then told him that the boy had drowned in De Vliet. The body would surface in a couple of days near a bridge, a sluice, "or something like that," to the left of the spot where the accident had happened. Croiset asked to be called back in case the child had not been found by Friday the 19th.

That Friday, with still no trace of Wim Slee, Croiset came to Voorburg. He had with him a sketch of the location where the boy had fallen into the water. He invited the police to get into his car and then drove to De Vliet. He stopped near the spot indicated by the dog and stated that he now experienced "strong emotions." Van Woudenberg noted "striking similarities" between the sketch and the actual location. Croiset said the child had drowned there but would surface on Tuesday morning near a

bridge some 800 yards downstream. This was to the right of the indicated spot (as seen from Voorburg), but the clairvoyant explained that "to the right" really is the same as "to the left" if you look at it from the other side. Near the bridge, van Woudenberg continues, "we saw there were points [on the sketch] that corresponded with what the uncle had been told earlier that week."

As it happened, Wim Slee's body was found the following Tuesday near the bridge. Presumably, the remains had been tangled up in refuse on the bottom of the canal.

Unless we want to make unfounded conjectures about a possible lapse of memory on van Woudenberg's part, the verdict must be: a hit. Yet I wonder if ESP is the only plausible explanation. Croiset gave his first "impressions" on the 16th, five days after Wim Slee had been reported missing. The case had received considerable media coverage. The police suspected that the boy had drowned in De Vliet and the dog had even indicated a likely spot. However, Croiset's initial "images" were vague, and he did not specify what bridge, sluice, or "something like that" he meant.

His description (as reported by van Woudenberg) would fit a good many bridgelike structures. He stated that the body had floated "to the left" but did not say from what vantage point. Moreover, from his request to be called back in case the body was still missing on Friday the 19th, we may surmise that he expected that the boy would have been found by that date. Friday the 19th would have been eight days after Wim Slee disappeared, and van Woudenberg tells us that "most bodies come to the surface in a maximum of nine days."

Croiset scored a hit only when he tried again. The accuracy of the sketch he showed on the 19th is not surprising. He had simply drawn the area where, according to the police dog, the child had fallen into the water. The possibility that he had obtained his information by normal means should not be ruled out. Van Woudenberg (personal communication) thinks this hypothesis somewhat unlikely, as the sketch contained a few details of the location not visible from the public road. I venture to suggest that the inspector *may* have underestimated the resourcefulness of a highly experienced psychic.

What remains is that Croiset, in his second series of "impressions," received eight days after the accident, correctly predicted both the date and the spot where the body would be found. Striking enough, but I doubt whether the odds against such a hit arising from chance alone are really astronomical.

Van Woudenberg (personal communication) is still impressed by Croiset's success, although he does not think it falls into the "conclusive evidence" category. "The weakest part of the case," he told me in February 1981, "is that it seems to be pretty unique. It happened 17 years ago and continues to be cited as possibly the best case that ever happened in

Holland. One cannot help wondering why there seem to be so few comparable successes."

Failures

As an isolated case, Croiset's achievement in Voorburg is fairly impressive. However, we must guard against a common fallacy in assessing such apparently compelling "proofs." The chance hypothesis can only be ruled out if we know the hit/miss ratio in the psychic's total score. On this point, no statistics are available, but there are a number of reliable indications.

In his English-language *Proceedings* (1960) and in a number of other publications, Tenhaeff has admitted that the number of successful consultations (successful from a practical point of view) is limited. The bulk of the material in his *Beschouwingen over het gebruik van paragnosten* (1957), his major Dutch work on psychic detection, concerns cases where the psychics supposedly demonstrated ESP without actually solving any crime or finding any missing person. There are very few prize cases, and these are cited time and again. Some of these "successes," as I have shown, are striking only when the facts have carefully been doctored. In his book *Ontmoetingen met Paragnosten* ("Encounters with Psychics," 1979) Tenhaeff quotes Croiset as stating that he was consulted by relatives of missing persons on an average of 10 to 12 times a week. That is something like 500 times a year, and Croiset has been in the business since the forties!

All this strongly suggests that thousands of Croiset's attempts have ended in failures—even if we generously use standards that allow, for example, the "Boy on Raft" case to be judged a success. Given so many misses, an occasional lucky hit is hardly surprising. The miracle van Woudenberg thought he witnessed may simply have been one of those successful guesses we can expect once in a while if the number of trials is sufficiently large. Tenhaeff is remarkably reticent about the many failures, except when he feels able to explain them in terms of misdirected ESP. The complete disasters that cannot be rescued even by parapsychological special pleading are conveniently ignored. Examples, however, are numerous.

In May 1956 the public prosecutor in Amsterdam revealed that three psychics had earlier that year attempted to shed light on the disappearance of a 31-year-old inhabitant of Rossum. Croiset had stated that the man was alive and staying in Germany. Shortly thereafter, the body was found in a canal in the municipality of Ootmarsum, Holland.

In 1969, Croiset went to Viareggio, in Italy, to look for 13-year-old Ermano Lavorini. He "saw" that the boy had fallen into the water while playing. In fact, Ermano had been killed by a friend during a quarrel. The body was found in the dunes.

In 1966, Croiset journeyed to Adelaide, Australia, to search for three missing children. A local "committee" paid the expenses. The clairvoyant was sure the children were buried under a new warehouse. He

advised demolition. The "committee" collected 40,000 Australian dollars to have the building pulled down. The soil under the concrete floor was removed to a depth of four yards. No bodies were found. Croiset urged them to dig one more yard, "and the children will be found." He was wrong. This costly mistake did not affect his reputation. Three years later the Amsterdam paper *Het Vrije Volk*, quoting an AP Telex, claimed that the Australian authorities had "refused permission to search on the spot."

In June 1973, Croiset was consulted by the relatives of a murdered Chinese from The Hague. The clairvoyant indicated that a Mr. Senf knew more about the crime. The relatives then abducted Senf and tortured him for three hours to get a "confession." Senf, however, had nothing to confess. He happened to be innocent. The following week, Croiset visited Senf, who was in the hospital recovering from his ordeal. He brought flowers and assured Senf that he now was quite convinced of his innocence.

In the police journal *Algemeen Politieblad* of January 9, 1960, Utrecht Superintendent Th. van Roosmalen published a catalogue of psychic blunders. In December 1957, he revealed, the 14-year-old son of the E. family disappeared from his parental home in the Utrecht River district. The house was near one of several canals in that part of town. After a couple of days, the parents contacted Croiset. The psychic came and led Mr. and Mrs. E. to the quay, where he stopped and pointed. "This is where your son got into the water and drowned," he said. "I am desolate that I have to be the first to offer you my sympathy for having suffered such a grievous bereavement." The police learned from neighbors that the parents next day had contacted an undertaker to arrange for the funeral. A few days later the boy was found, alive and well and hiding in a haystack.

In the light of such occurrences—and I could quote many more—*Esotera*'s description of Croiset as "the psychic who never disappointed" seems to contain an element of poetic license.

Note: While this article was in press, we were informed that Professor Tenhaeff died on July 9, 1981. Professor Tenhaeff had received prior notice of the results of Mr. Hoebens's investigations but declined several invitations to offer specific counterarguments. —Ed.

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Next issue: Evidence of Professor Tenhaeff's fraud.

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A Controlled Test of Perceived Horoscope Accuracy

People rate "placebo" horoscopes to be as accurate as their own.

Douglas P. Lackey

Recent studies of astrological hypotheses have tested the connection between specific astronomical configurations and objective human traits, such as ability in sports.[1] The present study differs from these in three respects: (1) it tests complete personal horoscopes, which correlate numerous traits in a single individual with numerous astronomical facts present at the individual's birth; (2) it tests the correlation between the traits predicted by astrology and the individual's assessment of his own traits—that is, it tests whether the horoscope is perceived as accurate; (3) it uses placebos to compensate for the tendency of people to rate as "accurate" descriptions that are alleged to be personally tailored for them, a well-known psychological phenomenon that might be dubbed the "personalization effect."

Thirty-eight college students ranging from freshmen to seniors at Baruch College of the City University of New York supplied birth dates and places of birth. Birth charts were prepared by computer program; astronomical accuracy was spot-checked and verified. The horoscopes were prepared from a standard manual of interpretation;[2] the manual's interpretations were checked against several other manuals and were found to be typical. To preserve uniformity, identical points in birth charts received identical interpretations. Interpretations were based on (a) the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn through the signs, (b) the same bodies through the houses, and (c) the aspects of conjunction, opposition, square, and trine. Since subjects were aware of their sun signs

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and hours of birth, information relating to the sun sign and to the house of the sun was suppressed in all horoscopes to keep the experiment blind.

Each subject was presented with two horoscopes, one his own, one selected at random, with identities concealed. Each horoscope contained, on the average, twenty paragraphs of interpretation. Subjects rated each paragraph separately, scoring "+1" for "accurate," "-1" for "inaccurate," and "0" for "inapplicable or neither accurate nor inaccurate."

Twenty-two subjects rated their own horoscopes accurate on balance; 14 rated them inaccurate; 2 rated them dead even. Nineteen subjects rated the placebo horoscope accurate; 19 rated the placebo horoscope as inaccurate. Subjects gave their own horoscopes a combined score of +74; the placebo horoscopes were given a combined score of +52. Though a statistically significant number of paragraphs in the nonplacebo horoscopes were rated accurate, a statistically significant number of paragraphs in the placebo horoscopes were also rated as accurate, and the difference between the excess of hits on the nonplacebo horoscopes and the excess of hits on the placebo horoscopes was statistically insignificant. Nineteen subjects rated their own horoscopes as more accurate than the placebo horoscopes; 18 subjects rated the placebo horoscopes as more accurate than their own horoscopes; 1 subject had the two dead even. In short, a person presented with two horoscopes and asked to identify which is his own is as likely to pick someone else's as the one that "describes me truly" as he is to pick his own.

Though the results of the test do not refute astrology or any astrological thesis, rationalization of the results by supporters of astrology requires ad hoc hypotheses. If the horoscope correctly correlates human traits with astronomical facts, then half of the subjects must have a mistaken picture of their own traits and half of them have a correct picture. There is no psychological theory that readily accounts for such an even division; the prevailing theories either describe self-deception as an anomaly that happens to some people some of the time or describe it as the result of unconscious forces occurring in all people most of the time. What is worse, since each placebo horoscope was in fact someone else's horoscope, astrology must postulate not only that half the population is self-deceived but that each self-deceived person believes mistakenly that his traits are quite like someone else's.

Though the identity of the placebo horoscope was concealed, each subject knew that each of the two horoscopes had a 50 percent chance of being his own. Thus I suggest that the high scores awarded to both the placebo horoscopes and the nonplacebo horoscopes result partially from the personalization effect, diluted by one-half. Some indication of the force of this effect is visible in a concomitant test that used the daily horoscopes printed in the newspapers. Subjects were instructed to read each day the prediction listed under their sun sign and also the prediction listed under the sign six months distant from theirs, rating the predictions "+1,"

"–1," or "0." Of 59 subjects in this test, 36 found the predictions under their own sign more accurate than the alternative predictions, and 23 found the predictions under the alternative sign more accurate than the predictions under their own sign, a marginally significant result. That even marginal significance appeared is remarkable, since all 59 students professed to have no faith in the validity of newspaper horoscopes, though the majority confessed to looking up their horoscopes regularly for amusement. Thus a subject, presented with two predictions and feeling that there is no reason to give credence to either, will retrospectively declare as "successful" that prediction which he identifies as somehow personally tailored to himself.

Notes

1. See, for example, the four-part report on the alleged "Mars effect," SKEPTICAL INQUIRER, Winter 1979-80, pp. 19-63.

2. The manual used was *The Compleat Astrologer*, by Derek and Julia Parker, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1971. ●

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Planetary Positions, Radio Propagation and the Work of J.H. Nelson

Randomicity tests show that the apparent association of radio disturbance days with planetary position is an artifact of Nelson's counting method.

Philip A. Ianna and Chaim J. Margolin

Considerable controversy has followed John H. Nelson's paper in the *RCA Review* (1951) correlating shortwave radio propagation with planetary positions. Inspired by earlier investigations suggesting a connection between the relative positions of the planets and the solar sunspot cycle, Nelson searched for a relationship between particular planetary positions and disturbances in shortwave radio communications across the North Atlantic. He discovered an apparent tendency for days of disturbed radio propagation to coincide with the dates when any pair of the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, or Saturn arrived at relative heliocentric angles of 0, 90, 180, or 270 degrees. Over the years Nelson has extended his work to include planets beyond Saturn and has applied his correlations to the problem of predicting times of poor conditions for shortwave communication.

Nelson has claimed high reliability from his methods of predicting propagation conditions. Of nearly 1,500 forecasts made in 1967, 93.2 percent are said to have been within one point of the observed quality on a six-point rating scale (Dean 1977). Apparently he relies on known periodicities and conventional effects as well as planetary configurations for these predictions. He has attracted some interest in amateur radio circles. In an article for *QST* magazine, E. P. Tilton (1976) argued that limitations in the traditional methods of predicting radio disturbances required some additional factor such as Nelson's planetary configurations. Nelson himself wrote a monthly propagation column for a number of years in *73* magazine

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and has published *The Propagation Wizard's Handbook* (1979).

However, it is the astrologers who have been the most enthusiastic supporters of Nelson's work. Since the heliocentric angles he used correspond to the traditional geocentric astrological aspects of conjunction, opposition, and square, they see the work as providing empirical confirmation of basic astrological beliefs. It is rare to find an astrology book omitting a discussion of these correlations. King (1975) points to Nelson's "sensational article" as shattering orthodox views about humans and the universe and finds the traditional claims of the influence of planetary positions "triumphantly vindicated"; it "unequivocally supports" astrological theory, say West and Toonder (1970). Sydney Omar devotes a full chapter of *My World of Astrology* to Nelson's work as verification of "ancient astrological concepts." The recent and admirably critical review of the astrological literature by Dean (1977) summarizes and updates in some detail Nelson's continuing investigations of radio disturbances. Owing to the very small number of statistical studies of the astrological aspects, Nelson's radio propagation studies are offered as providing "the most valuable insight of all."

Although, as mentioned, Nelson has modified his views somewhat, the original (1951) correlational evidence seems still to be the foundation for accepting the reality of the modulating influence of the planets. It is our purpose here to point out a possible fundamental difficulty with the initial investigation. We do not comment on the second part of Nelson's paper, where multiple configurations are considered.

Nelson's procedure was quite straightforward. From the *American Ephemeris and Nautical Almanac* for the years 1942, 1944, 1947, 1948, and 1949, he recorded the dates when the heliocentric relationship between any two of the six chosen planets was a multiple of 90 degrees. These dates are termed "configuration days." Mercury, of course, generates the largest number of configuration days, and there are multiple configurations as well on some of these individual days. Commenting on the general pattern of occurrences over the five years, Nelson writes:

> The analysis shows that these configurations are quite random in time and vary from cases where only one configuration between two planets takes place in a 14-day period to cases in which five of these six planets are involved in a configuration with some other planet within a forty-eight hour period. Cases where an inner planet makes a configuration with two outer planets within a twenty-four hour period are quite numerous.

From recorded logs of conditions on shortwave signals over the North Atlantic for each of the daily eight-hour "watch" periods for the years in question, the number of watch periods rated as disturbed at the Riverhead, L.I., receiving station could be correlated with the chosen planetary configurations. The results for a typical year, 1942, are shown in Figure 1. Nelson says, "It can be readily seen from these graphs that disturbed

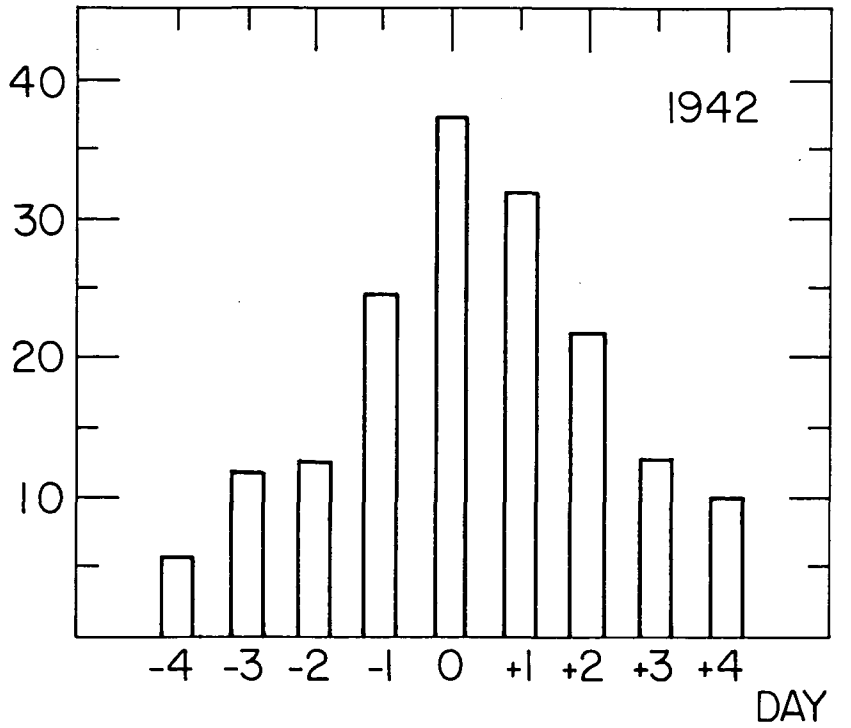

FIGURE 1. Histogram of eight-hour periods of disturbed radio propagation near days of particular planetary configurations, as given by John H. Nelson (1951).

conditions show good correlation with planetary configurations." Indeed, since you might surmise that no correlation would have produced roughly equal numbers of disturbed watch periods in each daily bin, the likelihood of finding such a peaked distribution purely by chance would be quite low. A chi-squared test applied to this data gives a $p \sim 10^{-7}$ for the probability that the sample might be truly uniform over the interval.

It is interesting to look a bit more closely into Nelson's results in order to try to understand what he did and if the correlations he found are justified. From the *Nautical Almanac* we find there are a total of 101 configurations on 91 separate days during 1942. First we note there are not very many periods of disturbed shortwave communication. Of a possible 273 disturbed eight-hour watch periods (hereinafter abbreviated DWP) on the 91 configuration days, Nelson's data show 86 percent of them to be *un*disturbed. At any rate configuration days are quite common; one occurs on the average of every 4.0 days. Now Nelson's histograms, all similar to the one in Figure 1, display the number of DWP for the configuration day and for each of the four days preceding and following. However, owing to the frequency of configuration days and hence their mutual proximity, if the counting criterion is that any (disturbed) day is counted from the

nearest configuration day, there *cannot* be very many days three or four days on either side of a configuration day. It thus seems probable that Nelson's distribution might simply come about from the bias toward configuration day in counting DWP.

We thought it would be instructive to check this possibility by seeing whether the distribution could be reproduced with a sequence of DWP randomly spread throughout the year. This sequence was constructed using a random number generator and imposing the constraint that one fourth of the 1,100 DWP be considered disturbed, i.e., for $0<n_{random}<1$, the period was considered "disturbed" if $n \geq 0.75$. We then compared the random sequence with the configuration days for 1942 numbered serially from 1 January, taking care not to count any day more than once. Our result is a distribution from the *random* DWP very nearly identical to Nelson's. The two are compared in Figure 2 and Table 1, where our numbers have been divided by two in order to match the number of DWP

TABLE 1

Number of disturbed eight-hour watch periods (DWP) for two different years (1942 and 1949) as taken from Nelson's (1951) tabulation of shortwave propagation conditions compared with simulated data. A configuration day is one where any pair of planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, or Saturn) stand at a relative heliocentric angle of 0, 90, 180, or 270 degrees.

	Configuration Day								
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
1942									
Number of DWP (Nelson)	6	12	13	24	37	32	22	13	10
Number of DWP (Our simulation)	4	8	12	25	36	33	16	9	3
1949									
Number of DWP (Nelson)	3	5	8	12	40	39	17	11	3
Number of DWP (Our simulation)	3	6	17	28	37	38	21	9	4

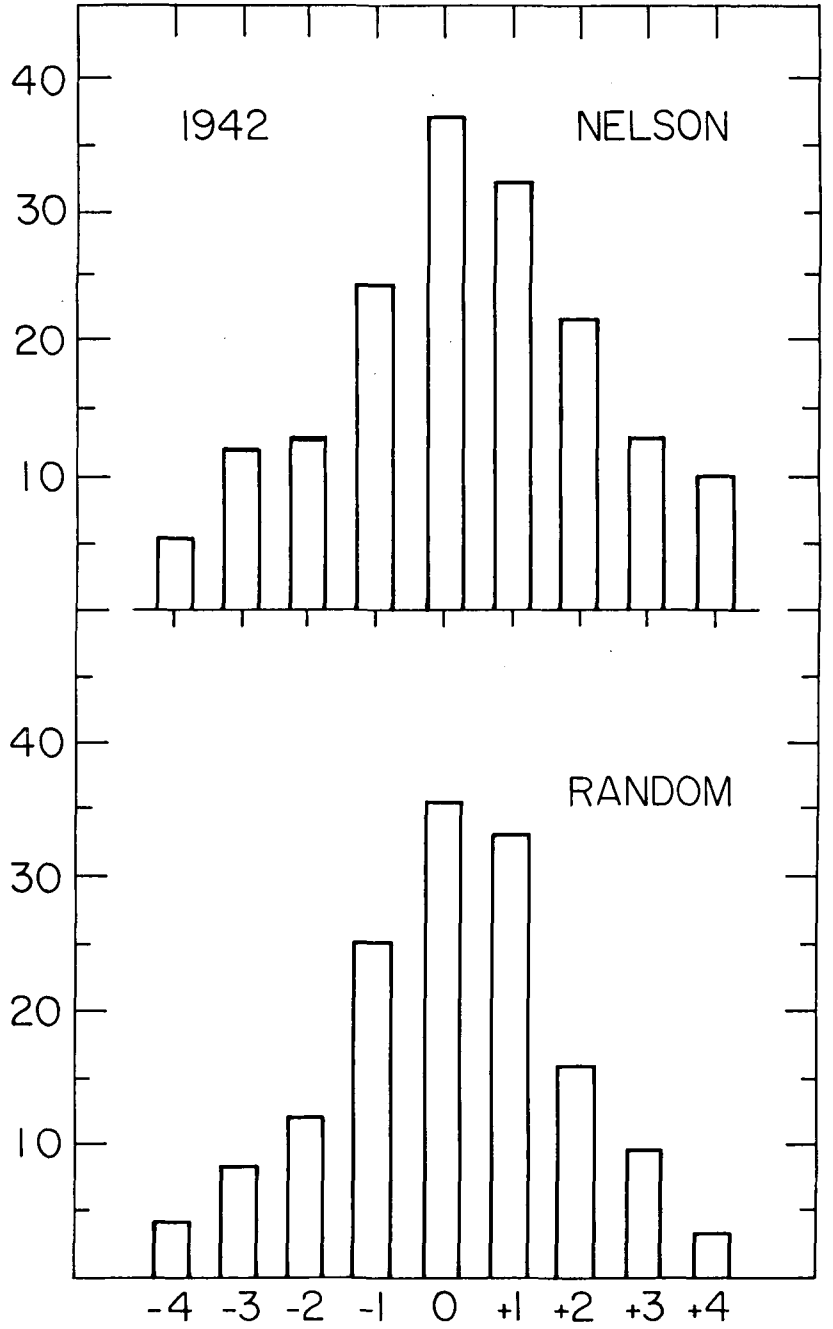

FIGURE 2. Comparison of Nelson's data with random distribution of disturbed periods of configuration days in 1942.

found by Nelson for configuration day.

The random numbers reproduced Nelson's correlations so well that we decided to try another year, this time choosing 1949, since it had the least symmetrical of the distributions. This year is characterized by having almost equal numbers of DWP for day "0" and day "+1." Another sequence of random DWP was generated as before and compared with the 104 configuration days extracted from the *Nautical Almanac* for 1949. This result is shown in Figure 3 and Table 1, again after scaling our numbers to Nelson's by halving the actual counts. Once more we match Nelson. The most prominent feature of the 1949 data is replicated in our counts of the random DWP, although the overall fit to Nelson is not quite as good this time.

As well as being visually similar, these pairs of distribution are statistically not very different either. Since chi-square is unreliable when bin counts are below five, we compared the Nelson and random DWP distribution, omitting the two extreme bins. We also adjusted the random frequency to give the same total counts as observed by Nelson. For 1942 the probability that the two distributions are not different is about 0.6; for 1949 we find $p = 0.02$, almost entirely due to the discordance at day 1.

Finally we tallied the number of days falling in each bin on either side of the configuration day for each of the years included by Nelson. The distribution is almost identical from year to year, as might be expected, and the five-year average is given in Table 2. We have also averaged the number of DWP for the five years. If the counts of DWP in each bin are then weighted upward to compensate for the varying number of days/bin,

TABLE 2

Average over five years of disturbed watch periods (DWP), number of days per bin on either side of a configuration day averaged over the five years, and the disturbed watch period distribution weighted by the number of contributing days per bin.

	Configuration Day								
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
Mean DWP	5.8	11.4	13.8	23.2	41.2	34.2	19.0	9.4	6.2
Number of days	8.2	16.0	32.8	55.0	91.2	72.8	41.6	22.0	10.4
Weighted Number of DWP	14.5	65.0	38.4	38.5	41.2	42.8	41.6	39.0	54.4

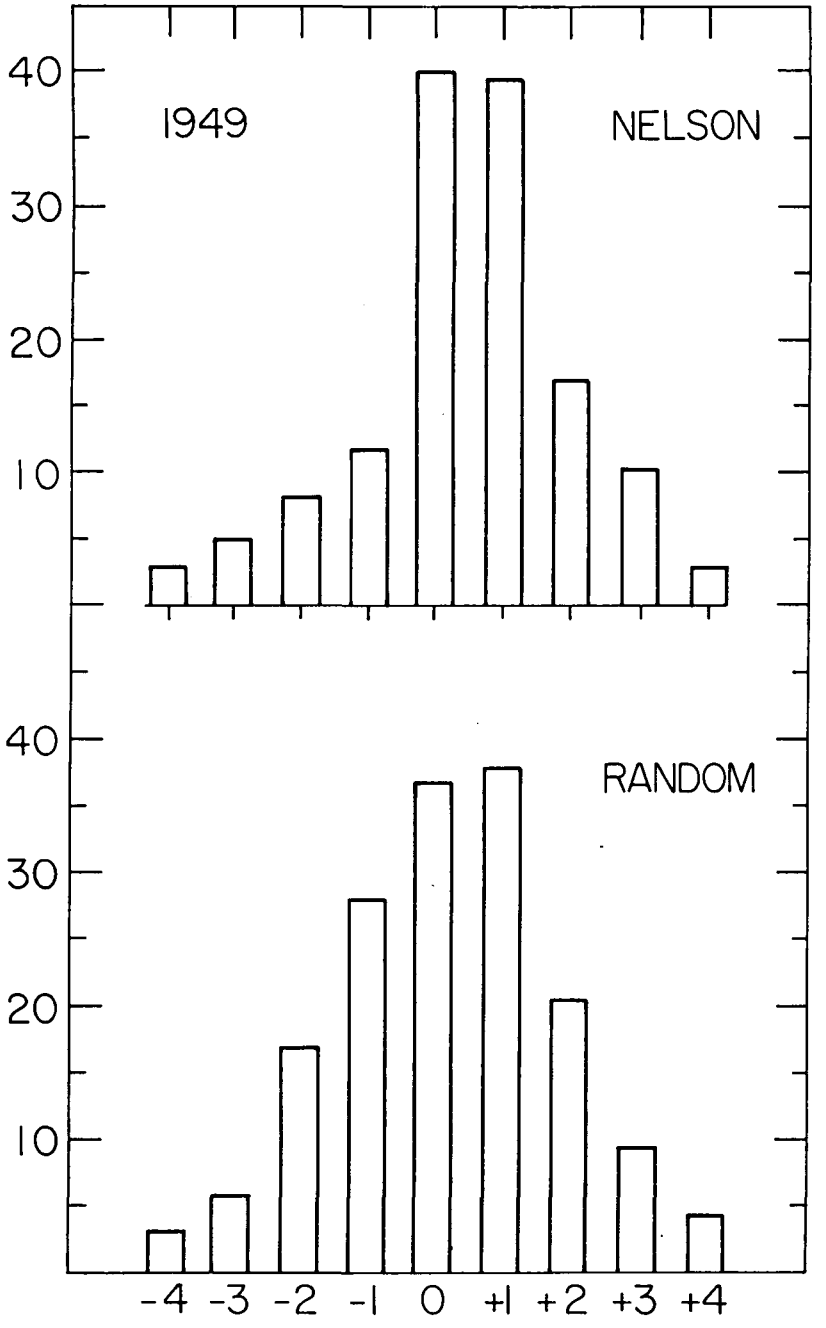

FIGURE 3. Comparison of Nelson's data with random distribution of disturbed periods for configuration days in 1949.

the distribution of DWP flattens out and there is no longer any excess of DWP on configuration day or the days on either side. If anything, there is a tendency for the suppression of DWP around configuration day. This cannot be considered significant however, since only the lower information endpoints deviate from uniformity. Furthermore, at the extremes, this weighted distribution is very sensitive to our day counts, and they are not entirely free of ambiguity in the assignment of days to particular bins preceding or following the configuration day.

In view of how very closely we could duplicate Nelson's histograms from a sample of randomly distributed "disturbed" intervals and the flatness of the distribution of DWP around configuration day, when the counts are properly weighted, we must conclude that Nelson's initial basic result is incorrect. The more frequently disturbed periods on configuration days compared with non-aspect days can be understood simply as an artifact of the close spacing of the configuration days and his counting procedure. Thus Nelson's correlation of disturbed shortwave radio propagation with planetary configurations cannot be construed as evidence for planetary influence, or as empirical support for astrological aspects.

Acknowledgment

One of us (PAI) is especially indebted to Dr. Walter E. Mitchell, Jr., of the Ohio State University for his criticism (1980) of a critique (Culver and Ianna, 1980) of Nelson's (1951) work that provided the motivation to go back and think a bit harder about Nelson's original paper, and for suggesting several improvements to a draft of this paper. We are also grateful to Geoffrey Dean for similarly helpful comments on this article.

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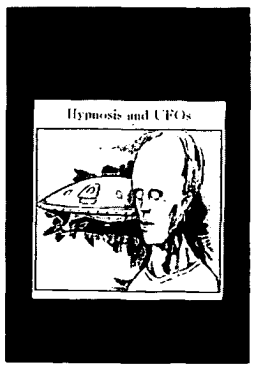

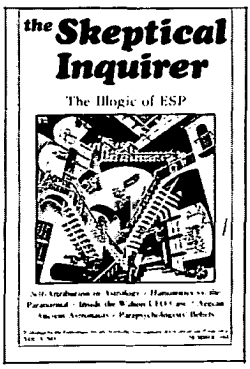

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Bermuda Triangle, 1981 Model

An investigation of 12 supposed new "incidents" finds serious discrepancies between the claims and the facts

Michael R. Dennett

With a voracious appetite the "Bermuda Triangle" is gobbling up ships and planes again! Or so we were informed by author-researcher Charles Berlitz in an exclusive interview for the *Globe*, a national tabloid, in April 1980.

"Fifty airplanes vanish in two years" announced the headline. Later, in the text, it was asserted that more than 100 ships also disappeared during the same period. Perhaps even more interesting was Berlitz's claim that the government, the Navy in particular, was conspiring to keep these disappearances a secret.

These are certainly strong statements. One might justifiably ask how Berlitz can substantiate them.

Berlitz is a well-known author, lecturer, and UFO proponent. Two of his books have been best-sellers, and he recently contributed an article to *Omni*. In the text of the *Globe* interview Berlitz was referred to as both a "Bermuda [Triangle] expert" and as a "top researcher." More impressive than these credentials, however, was Berlitz's willingness to identify the data on which he based his claims. So confident was the air of the interview that it almost seemed to say: Here are the facts, check them out for yourself. I decided to try.

A close examination of the article revealed that the large numbers of ships, yachts, and airplanes alleged to have vanished were only estimates

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This article is a result of a series of detailed investigations by the author, an associate member of CSICOP's UFO Subcommittee, who now lives in Seattle.

TABLE I

Aircraft and Vessels Lost Between January 1978 and January 1980

(Data from details of Berlitz interview, April 1980)

Year	1978											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Planes lost		1					1		1			
Vessels lost							1			2		

Year	1979											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Planes lost				1								
Vessels lost												

Year	1980											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Planes lost	3											
Vessels lost												

and that there were only a dozen "unexplained" incidents during the 25-month period ending in January 1980. Presumably, Berlitz's estimate that "an average of one plane about every two weeks and a ship or yacht each week vanished without a trace in the Triangle area" was based on the twelve incidents he detailed for us. He went on to add: "It now becomes more apparent than ever that most of the disappearances take place during December, January and February."[1]

However, it is not apparent to us that either of these statements can be deduced from *his* information. The nine incidents where ships or planes were allegedly lost do not seem to point to the three months Berlitz indicates; during the entire 25-month period no loss occurred in December. In the two Februaries only one incident was logged, and in the three Januaries, in only one, January 1980, were losses recorded (see Table I). The year 1979, which according to our "Triangle expert" should have had 24 aircraft and 52 vessel losses, is barren of "mysteries," with the exception of the disappearance of a single private aircraft in April. Even if the data are accepted at face value they fail to support Berlitz's estimate of disasters or the concentration of them in a particular period.

We are left, then, with the twelve "eerie incidents." The list, although far short of the announced figures, still seems impressive and includes four occurrences involving commercial airlines and three concerning either the Navy or the Marine Corps. The remaining five events relate to small private aircraft and vessels. Do these incidents substantiate Berlitz's claim that "the Triangle is sucking in victims"? The best way to answer this

question is to examine each mystery in detail.

Event No. 1, Berlitz version:

> January 27, 1978: National Airlines Flight 120, from Miami to Newark, N.J., suddenly loses power on all three of its jet engines. The Boeing 727 plunges from 33,000 feet over the Atlantic to 25,000 feet. The 103 passengers are terrified. The engines mysteriously restart and the plane lands at Jacksonville, Florida. Despite a grueling FAA mechanical inspection, officials find nothing wrong with the aircraft.

Although a bit sensationalized, this is a reasonably accurate description of what happened to National Flight 120. The mystery of why the engines momentarily failed was solved about a month later when an embarrassed flight engineer admitted that he had inadvertently forgotten to turn on the fuel boost pumps. With the boost pumps off, a vapor lock occurred, cutting fuel from the engines. As the 727 plunged without power the crew initiated restart procedures. During restart the boost pumps were selected, which overcame the vapor lock and returned fuel to the engines. With fuel now in the engines they started up, and the plane was brought in safely to Jacksonville.

There was considerable media coverage of the determination of the cause of the triple flameout of Flight 120, in part due to the fact that it was initially unexplained. National Airlines (now Pan American) put out a news release, and *Aviation Daily* carried an article covering the event. An open letter was posted by the flight engineer, and the incident was reported to the National Transportation Safety Board and to the manufacturer, Boeing Aircraft. Since Berlitz's interview took place more than two years after this event was explained, one can only conclude that his research sometimes falls short of perfection.

Event No. 2, Berlitz version:

> Feb. 22, 1978: Lt. Cmdr. Paul Smyth and navigator Lt. Richard Leonard vanish in their KA-6 attack bomber as they approach the aircraft carrier U.S.S. John F. Kennedy.

In the body of the article, Berlitz also states that Commander Smyth was "heading in clear weather to the carrier." This statement is simply not true. Weather records show that a storm had been sweeping east across the United States and had dropped an inch of snow on Norfolk that morning. The Coast Guard had announced a small-craft advisory. Out at sea the winds were from the northwest at 25-35 miles an hour and gusting up to 45. Skies were partly cloudy, not clear, and waves were about 10 feet.

Shortly after takeoff Smyth radioed that he was having trouble. Radar tracking indicated that the KA-6 was losing altitude, and contact was lost altogether approximately 28 nautical miles from the carrier's position (lat 36° 18.4′ N, long 74° 33.7′ W) on an azimuth of 266°. An immediate air search was launched, but no wreckage was found and it was

DEVIL'S TRIANGLE DISASTER

Bermuda expert alleges cover-up as fifty airplanes vanish in 2 years

TWO sophisticated Phantom jet fighters have fallen victims to the dread Bermuda Triangle, claims a top researcher who alleges the government is trying to cover up the incident.

"I have tried to investigate the disappearance but the whole thing seems to be shrouded in a veil of secrecy," said Triangle expert Charles Berlitz. In all, he estimates, 50 aircraft have vanished in the Triangle over the past two years.

The Navy cover-up concerns two F4 Phantom jet fighters, piloted by Marine Lt. Col. Fred Schober, 42, and Maj. Donald S. Jones, 35, which left Beaufort, South Carolina, Marine Air Station on the night of January 2.

On board for their anti-aircraft maneuvers over the Atlantic were radar officers Lt. Stephen Kaplitan, 25, and Maj. William J. Simpson, 35.

The four men were never seen again.

"We can only assume that they went down at sea," said Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Bob Jordan.

"They might have collided or run out of fuel or just flown into the ocean.

"We didn't know what to think."

But Berlitz points out that this isn't the only recent mysterious disappearance in that particular section of the Atlantic.

RESEARCHER Charles Berlitz says that the Bermuda Triangle is snaring victims on a daily basis.

GLOBE EXCLUSIVE by BARRY HART

State football coach Bo Rein's aircraft suddenly shifted off course and disappeared into the Atlantic.

"Without any doubt, far from quieting down, the Triangle is sucking in victims on an almost daily basis," pilots and captains who report unexplainable happenings to their vessels in the area."

But official Navy policy doesn't subscribe to the Bermuda Triangle theory, and a report of the fatal crash of portions of the report can be revealed or whether they fall under a security classification."

Bermuda Triangle researcher Dr. J. Manson Valentine, of the Miami Museum of Science in Florida, says his probe into the Beaufort incident has got him no-

given instructions not to discuss the incident.

"For my money I'd say there is quite a big cover-up going on."

Even the "widows" of the lost officers are being kept in the dark.

Pilot Schober's wife Mary, a mother of three, said: "Based on the experience of more than 20 years as a Marine Corps wife I know that I won't find out anything.

"There are just some things wives are not privy to. There is nothing they will tell me if I asked."

Berlitz says the Navy is also keeping quiet about the 1978 bomber crash off the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy.

"This was an extremely strange incident and had all the hallmarks of a classic Triangle disappearance," said Berlitz, author of "The Bermuda Triangle" and "Without a Trace."

"The whole thing has been played down by the Navy but I think the facts clearly speak for themselves."

Contact

On Feb. 22, 1978, the bomber left Oceana, Virginia, heading in clear weather to the carrier, which was stationed 180 miles out at sea, Berlitz said.

spokesman. "We knew where he was going, where he had come from, his position, we had him on radar and in radio contact. But he went down."

Margorie Smyth, the pilot's mother, said from her New Milford, New Jersey, home: "We believe it may have been the Bermuda Triangle.

"The plane could have been blown up and disintegrated.

"But, to be honest, we just don't know."

Berlitz says the disappearance of the bomber and later of the two fighter jets is almost identical to a 1945 incident, when five torpedo bombers vanished in the Triangle.

"The Martin Mariner flying boat was sent out to rescue them," the author said.

"It also disappeared without a trace."

"And like Cmdr. Smyth, the leader of that squadron gave a last puzzling radio message. 'We can't tell where we are... can't make out anything.'"

Berlitz noted that those planes disappeared on Dec. 5. On that same date in 1947, a C54 Superfortress plane disappeared in the same area.

A portion of the *Globe* article

Field Newspaper Syndicate

presumed that the aircraft had disintegrated on impact with the sea, 500 miles from the Bermuda Triangle.

The Navy, which I found most cooperative, listed the exact cause of loss as unknown, but according to the judge advocate general's investigative report this particular plane (AB524) had a history of mechanical difficulties.

Event No. 3, Berlitz version:

> July 17, 1978: Three people on board a Cessna 172, on a flight between Tobago and Trinidad, vanish in clear weather.

As in most of Berlitz's reports of incidents, no names are given; nor is the aircraft identified by registration or tail number. This makes the investigation difficult, especially because of the location. What makes this case significant is that the aircraft "vanish[ed] in clear weather." Or did it? The weather forecast in the *Trinidad Guardian* for July 17, 1978, was for mainly fair conditions, with seas slight to moderate, but with waves up to two meters in open water. As it turned out, both the forecast and Berlitz were quite incorrect about the weather for that day. The feature article on the front page of the Port-of-Spain daily the next day announced: "Torrential rains caused havoc in Trinidad and to a lesser extent in Tobago yesterday. The all-day downpour which continued into last night disrupted social and economic activities, caused several road accidents, severe flooding . . ." Apparently the rains were accompanied by high winds, since the article states that "roofs of scores of homes were blown off." The storm was not isolated to Trinidad; the *Guardian* gave an eyewitness report of conditions in Tobago as follows: "It is raining like hell over here."

James Ahwai, director of Civil Aviation (Trinidad), confirmed that a man named Johnston, his two companions, and his plane, a single engine Cessna 172 (N734TR), were caught in this storm and failed to reach their destination. Both land and sea searches failed to locate the plane. While the loss was certainly unfortunate, it is hardly mysterious.

Event No. 4, Berlitz version:

> July 1978: (No exact date.) A Navy porpoise training ship, with a crew of five, disappears off Key West, Florida.

The Navy has only one base within 100 miles of Key West, and that is the Naval Air Station at Key West. Strangely, no record of this incident was available from the base Office of Information, and a check showed that the *Miami Herald*'s Key West edition for the month of July 1978 was silent on this event. The editor of the local Key West paper was sure that no Navy vessel had been lost in the area during the summer of 1978, a statement which was confirmed by the Coast Guard. In Washington, the Navy people who had been so helpful with my investigation of the loss of Lieutenant Commander Smyth and his plane were unable to make a records check without either the ship's name or the name of at least one of the crew. Furthermore, they informed me that no such thing as a porpoise training vessel (either boat or ship) exists in the Navy, a statement I was able to verify by independent sources.

This event, based on the information given by Berlitz, cannot therefore be substantiated.

Event No. 5, Berlitz version:

> Aug. 7, 1978: A Braniff Airlines jet unexplainably begins to shake violently

Courtesy of Cessna Aircraft Company

Cessna 172 Skyhawk

and vibrate in midair over Cuba. The flight from Honduras makes it safely to Miami. Fifteen people are injured.

The *Miami Herald* for August 7 carried an article about tropical storm Bess, which was about 300 miles east-northeast of Tampico, Mexico, with winds of about 45 mph. It is possible that Bess was the cause of the problems noted by Berlitz, but it did not happen to a Braniff jet because Braniff did not then, nor does it now, have a flight between Miami and Honduras.

Event No. 6, Berlitz version:

> Sept. 21, 1978: A DC-3 passenger plane owned by Argosy Airlines vanishes near Cuba with four people on board.

In the summer of 1978, Argosy Airlines had been chartered by a citrus-growers group to fly 25 of its members to Cuba and then to return on September 21 to fly them back. Cuban and U.S. Treasury permission had been obtained and Argosy Airlines had made the first flight to Cuba and back. On the morning of the twenty-first, George Hamilton, the owner of the airline and the pilot for this flight, prepared his DC-3, registration number N405D, and fueled it to capacity (605 gallons) with 100-octane aviation gasoline. First Officer Peter Rustenberghe requested and received a weather briefing about 7:00 A.M. EDT. Rustenberghe also filed a flight plan indicating a departure time of 10:00 A.M. The flight was delayed until 11:29 A.M., apparently because of the late arrival of one of the cabin attendants. Leaving Fort Lauderdale, Flight 902 progressed south to a TADPO Intersection point, at which time Miami Center advised that radar service was terminated and that the flight should contact Havana control at 128.8 MHz. Argosy 902 acknowledged Miami Center's instructions and, according to Cuban officials, established contact with Havana control. At 12:43 P.M. Cuban radar contact was lost with Captain Hamilton's plane. A search was initiated at 1:47 P.M. by Cuban authorities and the U.S. Coast Guard joined the effort at about 3:00 P.M. In addition to numerous aircraft, four Coast Guard vessels were employed, but no trace of the aircraft was found.

What happened to Flight 902? We probably will never know for sure what occurred sometime around 12:43 P.M. to Flight 902, but one can make some educated guesses. Whatever caused the disappearance of this plane, it would almost certainly have had to be sudden and violent, as attested to by the lack of a distress call or wreckage. There are some clues to what that cause may have been. As a flight sanctioned by the Cuban government, it could have been a target for sabotage by anti-Castro elements in Florida. It is possible that a bomb was placed aboard the DC-3.

Had Berlitz really investigated this incident, he would have learned that a terrorist anti-Castro organization known as Hijos de la Estrella Solitaria (Sons of the Solitary Star) exists in the Miami area and that the Miami office of United Press International received a call from an alleged

spokesman for this group shortly after the flight was lost claiming "full responsibility for the explosion of the DC-3 over Cuban water."[2]

Event No. 7, Berlitz version:

> Oct. 14, 1978: A twin-engine fishing boat, *Buddy Too*, vanishes after leaving Miami on a 5-hour fishing trip with six people aboard.

This incident, like others that Berlitz includes, contains at least one major error, and without the aid of a number of people from the Coast Guard I would never have been able to track it down. The *Buddy Too* did not depart for a fishing trip from Miami but from Topsail Beach, North Carolina. The 26-foot power boat was on an all-day fishing trip, not a 5-hour excursion, and the weather was poor. In fact, a small-craft warning was in effect when the *Buddy Too* left port, and by afternoon the weather had deteriorated. A Coast Guard captain, who was questioned at the time by a local newspaper reporter, said that he would not have taken out a boat the size of the *Buddy Too* in that kind of weather. The six men were due back at about five o'clock, but the Coast Guard was not contacted until 8:05 P.M., well after dark. A considerable search effort was made, including Coast Guard, Marine, Navy, and Air Force planes and three Coast Guard ships. Some debris was sighted and an aluminum fishing locker was identified as belonging to the craft, grim indication that the small boat had gone down in rough seas more than 300 miles outside of the "Triangle."

Event No. 8, Berlitz version:

> Oct. 1978: (No exact date.) Three people on a 40-foot cabin cruiser disappear in clear weather and calm seas during a short trip between Bimini and Miami.

This case is, as Berlitz might describe it, a classic Bermuda Triangle disappearance. It has all the hallmarks of such an occurrence; namely, an unidentified vessel, with three unnamed people on board, vanishes on an unspecified date. The local newspapers carried no report of this incident and the Coast Guard was unable to confirm that a vessel matching this description had been lost in October.

Event No. 9, Berlitz version:

> Dec. 25, 1978: Braniff Flight 709, with 153 passengers on board, plunges 10,000 feet after an unexplainable series of tremendous vibrations in midair over Bimini. The plane lands safely at Miami.

According to a Braniff spokesman, Flight 709, en route to Miami, experienced clear air turbulence, a well-known natural phenomenon. No passengers were injured and no damage was done to the aircraft. The flight arrived on schedule in Miami.

Event No. 10, Berlitz version:

> April 26, 1979: A Cherokee Arrow, on flight between Miami and Nassau, vanishes, although land was in sight during most of its flight.

Courtesy of Piper Aircraft Corporation

Piper Cherokee Arrow

The National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration, both of which maintain extensive records of aircraft accidents, were unable to verify this one. A search of the *Miami Herald* and several other periodicals also failed to confirm that this event occurred.

Event No. 11, Berlitz version:

> Jan. 2, 1980: Two Phantom jets, with four Marine flyers on board, disappear after taking off on a routine training flight from Beaufort Marine Air Station, South Carolina.

This incident is the cause célèbre of the article and is reinforced not only by Berlitz's investigative skills but also by those of J. Manson Valentine.

What the article avoids emphasizing is that these two jets were participating in simulated combat maneuvers—at night. Maneuvers that might well bring the two planes into proximity to each other. This night exercise was restricted to a training area extending only 75 miles east of Beaufort, *more than 300 miles from the Bermuda Triangle.*

Berlitz and Valentine claim that the Marine Corps hushed up the incident, a contention that is difficult to accept since they never contacted the post commander, Colonel Rutherford, or the public affairs officer, Captain Jordan.

The Marine Corps official position is that, while the exact nature of the loss is unknown, a midair collision shortly after takeoff is presumed to have been the cause.

If these two "top researchers" had actually investigated this event, it is hard to understand how they missed the Beaufort County Sheriff's Depart-

ment, the Sea Pines–Forest Beach Fire Department, the Tybee Island Coast Guard Station, and the local newspaper, the *Island Packet*. Had they contacted any of these they would have found that there were six eyewitnesses to a brilliant flash or explosion in the vicinity of Hilton Head Island on January 2 at approximately 7:45 P.M. This observation of an apparent explosion, by a bartender, a security guard, a commercial pilot, two Hilton Head residents, and a Port Royal woman, coincides with the estimated position of the two F-4s. While these reports are not positive proof of a collision, they provide a reasonable answer to the disappearance of the two Marine aircraft. Any facts that would support the contention that a "cover-up" had been perpetrated or that Valentine and Berlitz made a thorough investigation seem to have vanished without a trace.

Event No. 12, Berlitz version:

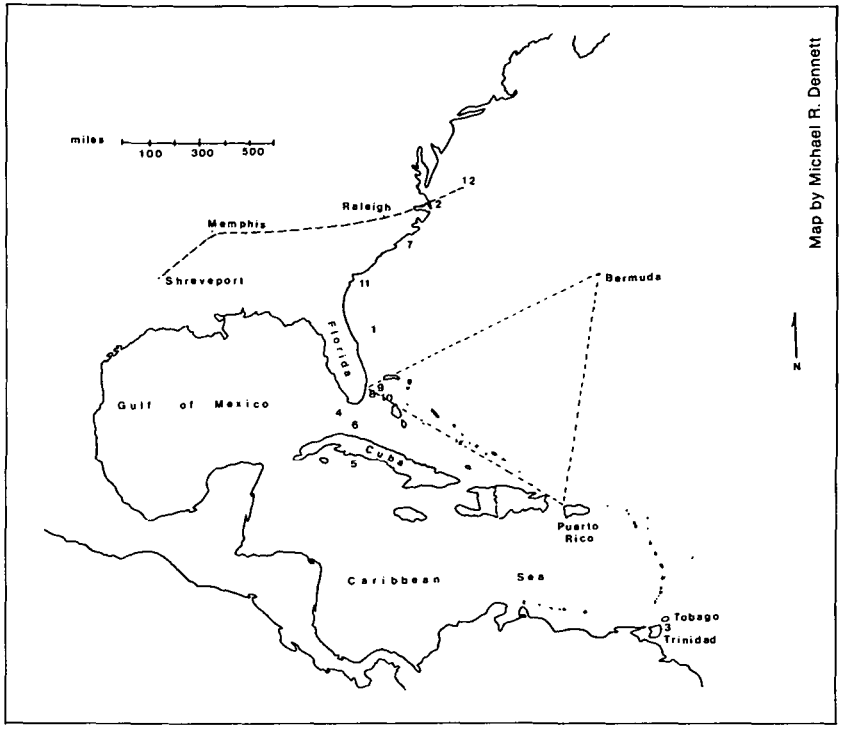
> Jan. 10, 1980: A twin-engine Cessna Conquest, carrying Louisiana State University football coach Bo Rein, leaves Shreveport for Baton Rouge. Suddenly, the plane flies in the opposite direction, heading for the Atlantic and the Bermuda Triangle. . . . Five hours later after traveling 1,500 miles in an almost straight line, the plane plunges into the Atlantic. . . . An Air Force spokesman describes the doomed flight as "very eerie."

Actually, the crash of the Cessna Conquest 441 took place on January 11. What happened, according to FAA investigators, was an apparent case of hypoxia (lack of oxygen) due either to a loss of cabin pressure or to the exceeding of the aircraft's service ceiling. On two previous occasions this particular plane had been grounded because of control problems that could cause it to climb or dive erratically. After taking off from Shreveport, the pilot, Lewis Benscotter, radioed that he was heading toward Memphis to avoid bad weather. As the aircraft climbed, probably the two men experienced hypoxia and then the aircraft flew under control of its autopilot until it ran out of fuel and crashed into the Atlantic. The *Washington Post* labeled it a "bizarre" incident, and one must agree that it was at least very unusual. But with thousands of private aircraft being flown every day, unlikely circumstances do occur.

By the use of adjectives like "doomed" and "very eerie," the writer can set a mood for his story on which he may then capitalize by distorting the events. "Suddenly, the plane flies in the opposite direction" implies that there is no apparent reason for the action. This type of rhetoric may be colorful, but it is not investigative reporting.

With this last incident we have exhausted Berlitz's proofs of a "devil's triangle disaster." As superficial as these events may seem individually, taken as a whole the picture is even more astonishing: 75 percent of the incidents *did not even occur in the "triangle"* (see map). Of the three events that did manage to fall in the triangle, two are unverifiable and the third is a simple case of clear-air turbulence.

Lawrence Kusche, a diligent investigative author, has remarked: "The



Map showing positions of the 12 incidents investigated by the author. Location of the alleged Bermuda Triangle is also outlined.

less a writer knows about his subject, the better equipped he is to write a mystery about it. Ignorance of the subject is, in fact, a major technique in writing about the mystery of the Bermuda Triangle and other subjects in the so-called paranormal." Berlitz's recent claims bear Kusche out.

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Notes

1. In his book *Without a Trace*, Berlitz claims December to be the month most likely for disappearances to occur. In the Fall/Winter 1977 SKEPTICAL INQUIRER (p. 99), Philip J. Klass points to National Transportation Safety Board records that show January and February to be the months with the most aircraft accidents. (This is not a surprising result when it is considered that these months are the peak of the tourist season for this region.)

2. Another possibility would be a catastrophic mechanical failure. In *Exploring the Unknown* (pp. 180-181), authors Cazeau and Scott relate an example of a malfunction of an aircraft that occurred to an Air Force major: "Some years ago his plane lost a propeller while in flight. The propeller spun off and passed through the fuselage of the aircraft like a buzz-saw, and out the other side, damaging still another engine. Hydraulic lines and wires were cut, disabling most controls. The entire incident occurred in about three seconds. Three seconds—from a well-functioning aircraft to one nearly cut in two, with no controls and two engines lost. ●

Scientists and UFOs

Every moment we must make decisions about what to do, based on what we think will happen next. We wouldn't even take a step if we thought that a yawning chasm would open up before us in the midst of our living rooms. Scientists have assessed the probability of UFOs being flying saucers from other worlds, and have decided that the probability is so low that the possibility is not even worth considering. We have better things to do with our time and with our national resources. We have so many other, simpler explanations of the phenomena that are reported as UFOs that we apply Occam's Razor and decide to call the identification of UFOs with extraterrestrial visitation false. *UFOs may be unidentified, but they are probably not flying, nor for the most part are they objects.*

—Jay M. Pasachoff (Williams College-Hopkins Observatory), *Contemporary Astronomy*, 2nd ed., Saunders College Publishing, Philadelphia, 1981.

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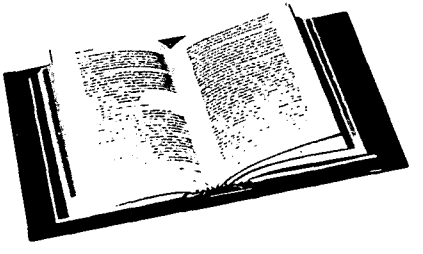

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Observation of a Psychic

An anthropology seminar in traditional healing becomes an eagerly accepted pitch for curative psychic treatments

Vonda N. McIntyre

My local paper carried an announcement of a seminar on traditional healing methods in nontechnological cultures. It looked like something that would be worth attending: it would dovetail with the story I was working on at the time, and it might be worked up into an article.

I never used any of the information presented for any of my fiction. I never wrote the article I had planned. It was far from being an anthropology seminar. I found myself involved in a course in psychic healing.

The first segment was a biofeedback demonstration. A representative from a local biofeedback-machine company had brought the latest alpha-wave training equipment to show us. This part of the seminar had nothing at all to do with the advertised purpose of the meeting. Even the lecturer did not seem to know exactly why the machine and its attendant were there. A few interesting points were brought up, but since no one present had had alpha-wave training no one was able to make the machine do more than emit an occasional beep. The demonstrator was careful not to make any pronouncements about his machine, making the presentation dull as well as uninformative.

Finally the main lecturer began his talk. At that point I was still expecting an anthropology lecture—thinking that the biofeedback demonstration was an inexplicable aberration. (I would have assumed it was going to be referred to during the segment on yoga, except that yoga was disparaged as taking far more time and effort than training on the machine.) But there was no anthropology involved at all. The lecturer told

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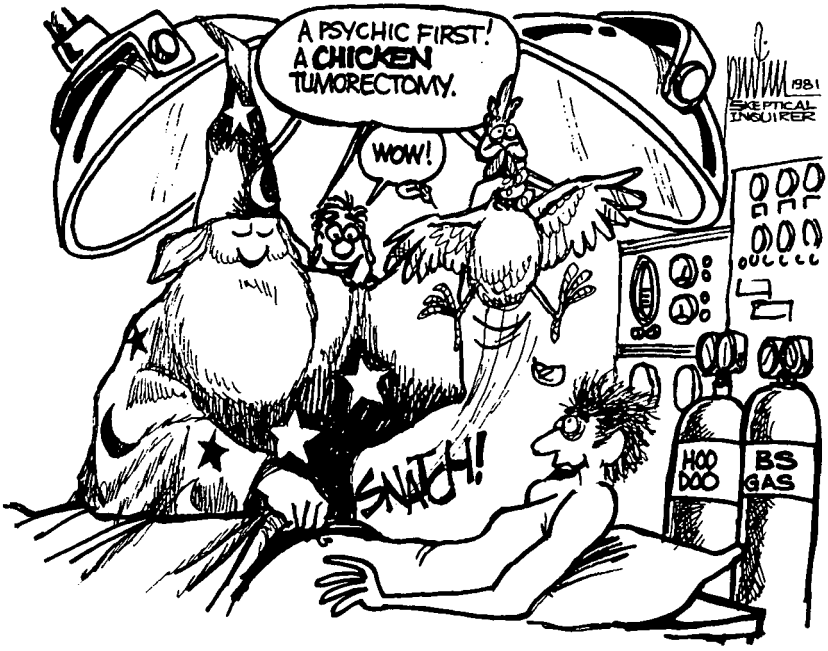

us a bit about himself and his consulting jobs for various large organizations that hired him to increase the self-confidence of their employees. He told us about instances in which he had performed cures that sounded nothing short of miraculous. He did not explain his ability as a special gift, from God or some other supernatural agency; he offered no explanation for it at all. He referred to it as though it were an inexplicable power that inhabited him, rather than something he possessed or consciously controlled.

Apparently he did control it to some extent, however. After talking to us for only about an hour, he mentioned that he sometimes gave private treatments; then he called a short break. During the free time he was surrounded by members of the audience who were eager to sign up for sessions—at $30 for a half-hour.

Though the lecturer combined self-assuredness with a slightly self-effacing diffidence, sounded plausible, and made one want to trust him, he was not charismatic. There was nothing exciting, entertaining, outrageous, or even attention-getting in his manner. No one threw their crutches to the floor and stood up crying, "I'm cured!" He simply said he gave curative psychic treatments, and people lined up to give him their money.

The break over, he discussed other psychic healers, some of whom he had sought out. The psychic surgeons in the Philippines were much in the news at the time; he had worked with several and had taken movies of some, which he proceeded to show us.

The first film was of an operation to remove a tumor from behind a

man's eye. The lecturer apologized for the quality of the film, as well he should have, because as he described the healer's pulling the patient's eye out of its socket and letting it lie exposed on the man's cheek while he dug around in the nerves for the tumor and extracted it, all I could see were indistinguishable blurs, figures moving here and there, and some lights. The only thing I saw that matched his description was a man lying on a table.

Yet the rest of the audience watched the film in a silence broken only by an occasional murmur of awe. My reaction to it was a severe case of the giggles, but the aura of belief was so strong that I was afraid to laugh.

During the discussion that followed, the lecturer said he had performed similar operations under the tutelage of one of the best psychic surgeons. While he said he preferred to stick with his own methods of healing, he made clear—without ever stating it outright—his ability to refer those interested to psychic healers in the Philippines.

We then heard about psychic auras, astrology, reincarnation, and Kirlian photography. When it was time to go, the audience took a while to disperse, and I wandered around listening to the conversations, seeking, in vain, someone who was left with a visible flicker of disbelief.

The next day was the same, only more so. We were instructed in the art of the healing massage, which has to be done exactly right, in order to dissipate the energy the treatment creates, or the recipient becomes extremely ill. We created psychic energy by concentrating on the space between our hands as we moved them very fast, as if rubbing a basketball. (The sensation of holding an invisible ball *is* quite striking, but since the blood rushes to your fingers until they redden and swell slightly, it's not a great surprise that there's a feeling of pressure.) We learned all about pyramids—from small (for razor-blade sharpening and meat storage) to large (for enhancement of one's sex life). We watched a demonstration of how a substance harmful to an individual (either an allergen or an actual poison) will cause the person's left leg to shorten (temporarily, I'm happy to report) by one to two inches when a vial of the toxin is opened near the subject. As one might expect, the lecture organizers did the measuring.

The last two events of the morning session finally set me off. One was relatively trivial and the other significant—but it was the trivial episode that embodied the seminar in microcosm. In an almost offhand remark the lecturer said drinking water should always be distilled, and he mentioned a small but rather expensive home still. Distilling was really the only way to get all the poisons out.

That was when a member of the audience observed, sadly, that many of the things he had advised us to do were quite costly: private healing treatments, biofeedback machines, room-sized pyramids, trips to the Philippines, and so on.

The lecturer backed off suddenly, and rather defensively, and said that filtering the water was almost as good. Very nearly as good. Ninety-

nine percent as good, in fact. Then again, if even a filter cost too much, you could create psychic energy and throw it into the water. Sometimes you could even see the change: he said that, when he had created psychic energy with a roomful of physicians and they threw *their* psychic energy into a pitcher, the water turned bright blue. (We tried it. It didn't work.) Someone asked if pyramids could purify water: yes, that would do just as well. Finally, someone suggested leaving a bottle of water in the sunlight, and the suggestion was enthusiastically accepted: after a few hours of sitting in the sun, water would indeed be completely purified.

Everything was great. *Everything* was terrific. *Everything*, no matter how far afield, no matter how preposterous, was accepted as equally applicable to whatever was being discussed. Harry Houdini had investigated mediums, psychics, and occult occurrences and never found one he thought was not a fraud, though he badly wanted to contact the spirit world. Our lecturer sought out psychics and occult occurrences and, judging from what he told us, never found one he thought *was* a fraud. It was his uncritical acceptance, the complete lack of structure to his beliefs, that made it impossible for me even to consider taking anything he said on faith. But this inconsistency did not appear to trouble any other member of the audience; their conversations indicated they had an all-embracing attitude toward any sort of mystical happening.

The last event of the morning was a second film. This one was of better technical quality: you could see what was going on. Or, more accurately, you could see what was *not* going on. It was described as a cancer operation in which the psychic surgeon made an incision in the patient's abdomen, reached in and felt around, removed the tumor, and sealed the incision without leaving a scar. What he was actually doing was performing sleight of hand of such amazing ineptitude that even I (having had two lessons in the art) could tell exactly what he was doing: folding his fingers against his palm and palpating a flabby abdomen with his knuckles, disguising the field of the operation with "blood" that looked, flowed, and smeared like colored water, and using a stage magician's trick to conceal chicken liver, or whatever, to produce as a tumor.

The audience was even more awe-struck than it had been the day before; it was too much for me. I am not a professional debunker; I don't like to ridicule beliefs that give people comfort, and I don't even deny the possibility that some strange occurrences may be inexplicable in terms of present knowledge. But there was nothing mystical or psychic going on at that conference or on those films. At the lunch break, as I started to leave quietly, the seminar organizer (who knew I intended to write an article) caught up with me and asked what I thought of it so far.

I told him.

My irritation finally overcame my wariness of the surrounding group of believers, and I said among other things that the "psychic surgeon" films were a pitiably obvious fraud.

The organizer said, in a stunned and hurt tone, that the lecturer *never* said we *had* to believe the films.

I made a rude noise and fled.

I had always assumed that any "performance"—a story, a dance, a class, a series of lectures—should, in order to be effective, have a structure. Episodes lead to inevitable (even if sometimes surprising) and satisfying climaxes. Assertions are supported by evidence that leads logically to conclusions. The structure captures the onlookers and carries them with the flow of the work. But this lecture series *had* no structure. The assertions and demonstrations were disjointed; no thread of logic, rationality, or even philosophy connected them.

The most memorable thing about the weekend, and the most disturbing, was the reaction of the audience. The adherents of the new cults and self-help programs run by charismatic leaders are generally portrayed as young, emotionally abused, disillusioned, and abandoned by their parents, or poor, uneducated, disenfranchised, and neglected by society. This audience did not even approach the stereotype. About half were startlingly straight-looking college students, fashionably dressed, as conventional as a bunch of Young Republicans; and about half were middle-aged and elderly prosperous-looking couples. There was no general air of disaffection; they were not people one expects to see searching for something—anything—to believe in. I have not been able to understand why they found this disconnected morass of psychic pseudotheory and cheap tricks compelling.

I don't think they were fools or that I am inherently the world's least gullible person. When I think about this experience, I am left with the unsettling conclusion that the only significant difference between me and the rest of the people there was a very short course in amateur sleight of hand. ●

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Book Reviews

The UFO Verdict: Examining the Evidence. By Robert Sheaffer. Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1981. 242 pp. $15.95.

Reviewed by George O. Abell

Robert Sheaffer describes UFOs as jealous phenomena; he is applying the less common meaning of the word: "Suspiciously watchful." Indeed, UFOs are jealous in this respect, for they are extremely careful in selecting where and to whom they will appear.

Some people seem to have all the luck. Those who (often) are *not* used to watching the sky not only see UFOs but are taken aboard, medically examined, and even made love to; moreover; they frequently have not *one* such UFO experience but several, or even many. I, an astronomer who photographed most of the sky with the world's largest Schmidt telescope, have *never* seen one! Nor have most of my colleagues.

To be sure, I have received many reports of strange objects in the sky. More often than not they turn out to be prosaic things, such as Venus or some other bright planet, or a weather balloon, although very remarkable motions and other activities are often attributed to these familiar objects. Some reports I have been given are so bizarre that I cannot offer certain explanations, but in no such case has there been evidence to suggest that there is anything in need of an explanation. Moreover, I am aware of the incredible interstellar distances and the enormous time and energy that would be required to travel between the stars.

Consequently, I am skeptical of the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) for UFOs; I consider it one of the *least* likely explanations for the illusive (jealous) UFO phenomenon. It cannot be absolutely ruled out, however, and it would be enormously exciting if we found hard evidence for alien spacecraft—the first proof of life beyond earth. So in cases where I am competent to offer useful help, I am willing to investigate evidence. I have looked into several such cases, but so far have found satisfactory prosaic explanations with no need (alas!) to postulate the more exciting but less likely one. No Nobel prizes for that!

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Yet, some of my friends who are ETH proponents (or at least UFO proponents) tell me that the more I read and study about the subject, the more I will become swayed by the evidence. Actually, the opposite is the case. Over the past several years I have read a good deal and have put in more study than I really have time for, and the more I look into it, the more kooky the whole thing seems.

The UFO Verdict makes this point far better than I could have expressed it. Sheaffer is a well-known skeptic but also a very experienced UFO investigator. His twenty-two chapters assess the nature of the evidence, describe the history of UFOlogy, provide interesting insight into the people and groups involved in its study, and consider the psychology of UFOlogy and the relationship between it and science. Interwoven among these more general discussions are chapters describing specific UFO cases and probable solutions (sometimes due to Sheaffer's own investigations). The forty-five photographs and diagrams are largely related to these cases.

Incidentally, the photographs are the poorest feature of the book. I realize that it is expensive to reproduce half-tones, and for this reason it is common to group them together on glossy paper and tip them into the middle of a book. But in *The UFO Verdict* the tip-ins are on the same paper stock as the text (so far as I can tell) and of such poor quality and at such a reduced scale as often to be almost useless.

Sheaffer's story, on the other hand, is very clear: plausible prosaic explanations can be found for all of the phenomena so far described. One cannot always prove that these explanations are the correct ones, but if plausible explanations can be found why seriously entertain esoteric ones? Of course *all* UFO cases cannot possibly be taken up in a single book, and I am not expert enough to assert that some more convincing cases have not been omitted; but colleagues more expert than I (including "believers") tell me that there is no hard evidence for the ETH. Nor, I must admit, have I carefully checked every statement Sheaffer makes or all of his references. But I did check some, and found no glaring inconsistency.

I am quite aware that the true believer will not be swayed by Sheaffer's arguments. But to the uncommitted reader, I say, try to be *open-minded*—that is, resist the urge to *want* to believe what appears to be the most bizarre or entertaining. Wishing does *not* make it so, Disney notwithstanding. Study the discussion. If doubtful, check up the references to see if they are correct. Then carefully examine the evidence, apply rational logic, and attempt to arrive at a conclusion—or no conclusion if the evidence is inconclusive—as should a juror in a criminal trial. It is just possible that you might find the ETH less convincing than romantic instinct would desire. (But rest assured that the *real* scientific frontier of fundamental particles, forces of nature, and cosmology will, when you look into it, provide a full measure of mystery and excitement!)

All of this says nothing about the likelihood of intelligent life in the universe, as Sheaffer points out in Chapter 13. Perhaps we are alone among technological societies in the galaxy, but perhaps the galaxy is teeming with civilizations. If the latter is the case, we have a finite chance of learning about it with radio communication. It is even remotely possible that spacecraft from other worlds have visited earth. But as Sheaffer explains, the odds, based on what we know today, are enormously against it.

If I had to criticize Sheaffer, it would be for his slightly crusaderish stance. He reads a little like a prosecutor trying to convince the jury that the accused should be sent to the chair. My gut feelings are in agreement with Sheaffer. Yet I know that

many sincere people take UFOs very seriously, and I would have preferred a lower-key approach—one that would present the evidence and documentation and let the argument sell itself. But this is a matter of taste.

I liked the chapter on photographic evidence and how many experts have been fooled by hoaxes later exposed, and I thought the chapter on the undependability of eyewitness testimony was especially good. Sheaffer includes here the famous account of astronomer Simon Newcomb, reporting on how, in 1860, a group of army officers were confused by a routine apparition of Mars. Sheaffer also points out how even trained astronomers can be misled by wishful thinking—as by Lowell's (and others') observations of nonexistent canals on Mars. I think Sheaffer errs, however, in implying that astronomer George E. Hale had been fooled by Barnard's attempt to measure the parallax of the Andromeda nebula (such a measurement of the apparent shift of that remote galaxy due to the motion of the earth about the sun is impossible with existing techniques). Barnard, not knowing the nebula was very distant, attempted to measure its parallax, but Hale, in reporting his results, pointed out that the measured effect was within expected errors, and anyway was in the wrong direction to be real. But this is a quibbling detail. By the way, Sheaffer might also have mentioned how the highly respected Adrian van Maanen's incorrect measures of the rotations of galaxies delayed the beginning of extragalactic astronomy for several years. Eyewitnesses are far from infallible—even trained scientists.

Sheaffer documents a striking similarity between modern UFOlogy and the arguments advanced for the existence of fairies and witches in past times. Of course we do not believe in fairies and witches today (or do we?), but the eyewitness reports and photographic evidence not only were as convincing as much of that for UFOs but were remarkably parallel!

When I read the sections dealing with "mysterious men in black," such naive theories for UFOs as that they come from within the hollow earth through a hole in the North Pole (with photographic "evidence" for this one!), and predictions in the *National Enquirer*, I must admit that I found myself accusing Sheaffer of overkill. After all, what rational American takes the *National Enquirer* seriously? But then it occurred to me that not only do many millions of Americans take the *National Enquirer* seriously, but even many prominent UFO proponents give credence to the most preposterous unsupported claims. The UFO journals are unbelievably uncritical. They list as recommended reading, for example, what I regard as such superficial and exploitative pulp as Ralph and Judy Blum's *Beyond Earth*. I once met Ralph Blum at a television debate, and frankly I question whether he takes UFOs even as seriously as I do.

The UFO journals seldom discuss prosaic explanations offered for the "best cases" (Sheaffer documents this point well). The wildest stories are accepted with no more supporting evidence than, for example, the star map by Betty Hill, so crude that it can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Subsequent to her alleged abduction, Betty Hill has seen UFOs on a more or less regular basis; still the proponents give her story credence. I am led to think that it would be hard, or even impossible, to make up a tale so wild that it would be decisively rejected by the UFO community.

I do not mean, though, that all UFO investigators are nuts. I have met some that are intelligent, careful, and certainly sincere. As Sheaffer points out, Bruce Maccabee, a prominent UFO analyst who is not generally skeptical, is nevertheless

very competent and thorough. I had occasion to read his report on the 1978 New Zealand UFOs, and I agree with Sheaffer that it is a meticulous document, displaying considerable training and professionalism. On the other hand, near the beginning of the draft I read (here I rely on memory, for I no longer have the report) Maccabee remarks about this finally being the real thing—real UFOs! Sheaffer discusses the New Zealand sightings and offers what seem to me to be plausible prosaic explanations; they may not be the correct explanations (we shall probably never know them), but Maccabee revealed a predilection toward *non*prosaic ones.

In fact, in my experience, most UFO proponents are *not* open-minded. I, at least, acknowledge the possibility—albeit slight—that extraterrestrial spacecraft could exist and am willing to look and be convinced. The UFOlogists, it seems to me, are committed in advance to the ETH.

Toward the end of *The UFO Verdict,* Sheaffer describes alternative ideas about the UFO phenomenon. There is, he says, a "new wave"—a range of theories that describe UFOs as "extradimensional," as beyond human understanding or investigation. But if so, he explains, they are also beyond study by any scientific means; that is, they are untestable, and hence not within the realm of science. This, to me, would make UFOs not very interesting.

What, then, keeps up the interest in UFOs? Certainly the media play an important role. Sheaffer does not condemn the media for seeking news and entertainment material, but he does blame them for having a double standard on news. The bizarre reports are prominently covered but seldom the explanations—when they are, it is with little emphasis. (Incidentally, Sheaffer incorrectly gives NBC credit for producing the television series "In Search Of." That dubious honor belongs to Landsberg Productions in Los Angeles; the programs are syndicated through NBC.)

I cannot say that *The UFO Verdict* is a highly authoritative account of the subject, for I am not enough of an expert. I can say that much of the book on which I *can* pass judgment *is* accurate. For example, Sheaffer displays a really excellent knowledge of astronomy. Also, I can confirm most of what he says about eyewitness testimony about celestial objects. I would have preferred a less debative style, but nevertheless Sheaffer is absolutely correct that UFOs (like other paranormal things) are jealous phenomena. I strongly suspect that he is batting close to a thousand throughout. *The UFO Verdict* is by far one of the best works on the subject I have seen, and I strongly recommend it to both the believers and the skeptics (that is, the open-minded). ●

The Metal-Benders. By John Hasted. Routledge, London, 1981. 279 pp. £9.75.

Reviewed by Nicolas Walter

What were once called supernatural miracles and are now called paranormal phenomena tend to follow fashions. During the past couple of centuries, for example, Mesmerist performances spread from France across Europe; then mediumistic performances spread from North America across the world, later followed by the extrasensory perception performances of dice-throwers and card-guessers. During the past decade the metal-bending performance of Uri Geller, as reflected in the media from 1972, set the latest fashion. Like so many such phenomena, metal-bending may seem too tedious and trivial to bother about, but it has been taken seriously by some intelligent people, including a few scientists.

Rational examination of paranormal claims is more than 2,500 years old, going back as far as Croesus's comparative test of the Greek oracles, and modern investigation dates from the scientific tests of Mesmerism 200 years ago. Yet psychical research is still a dubious area—whether wrongly, as parapsychologists claim, or rightly, as most other scientists think—and the recent work on metal-bending has not improved the situation. One of its leading figures is John Hasted, professor of experimental physics at Birkbeck College, London, who became interested in Geller in 1974, and *The Metal-Benders* is the result of his involvement in the subject since then. Like most such books, it is both fascinating and frustrating—fascinating because it shows an intelligent person struggling with extraordinary things, frustrating because it shows him losing the struggle.

Hasted accepts that "a very few people appear to be able to deform and fracture pieces of metal, and occasionally other materials, just by stroking them between their thumb and fingers, or even without actually touching them," and he assumes that this is a genuine paranormal phenomenon that will amend existing theories of physics and should alter our view of the world. About half the book consists of descriptions of his own experiments on metal-benders, and about half consists of discussions of these and other aspects of the paranormal. The mathematical and technical details can hardly be challenged by a layman, but the more general material must be challenged.

In fact Hasted challenges himself by saying, "Believe nothing that you hear and only half of what you see," which is an odd motto for such a book. He says, "The reader must make his own assessment of my competence as an observer and experimenter," but exposes his own incompetence better than anyone else could. The opening account of his conversion to a belief in paranormal metal-bending during a brief encounter with Geller reveals him to be the ideal audience for a conjuror. He comments that "the conditions of the observation were sufficiently good for me to claim that a conjuror could not duplicate exactly what I reported," but he doesn't let a conjuror try.

The crucial issue is not how paranormal metal-bending happens but whether it happens. Hasted is well aware of the danger of error and trickery, since much of his laboratory work is directed to eliminating them; yet he prefers to work with

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"immature teenagers and younger children," partly because he is "much more confident of being able to detect fraud" with them; yet such confidence is itself a danger, especially toward the very people traditionally associated with apparently spontaneous mediumistic phenomena and poltergeists. He says that paranormal metal-bending is more likely to occur when the performer's attention is relaxed, but forgets that this may also apply to the observer.

Hasted is well aware that his work has been subjected to criticism, but he says that "these chapters are not the place to refute such attacks as have been made on me," though it is hard to imagine a better place. Instead he sometimes tries counterattacks that make his position even worse. He says of his encounter with James Randi, the American conjuror who is a leading opponent of paranormal claims, that "he attempted trickery during a visit to my office" and that "the level of the interview was so low that I have decided that a detailed discussion of it here would serve only to embarrass him." Randi's version—in *The Magic of Uri Geller* (1975)—contains a detailed account of how he tricked Hasted and concludes with the two-edged verdict that Hasted "is incapable of deception—except when practicing it upon himself." He says of the work of John Taylor, the British scientist who has also done research with metal-benders, that he at first "believed paranormal metal-bending was a real effect" but later was to announce something of a change of heart, brought about by his failure to detect the presence of electromagnetic radiation during metal-bending." Taylor's version—in *Science and the Supernatural* (1980)—is that he has decided all metal-bending that he has observed could be caused by normal forces or by fraud.

Hasted is a likable person and a readable writer, but *The Metal-Benders* gives the impression that its real subject is not paranormal metal-bending but normal mind-bending, and that the extraordinary people are not the young ones who perform the latest paranormal fads but the grown-up ones who encourage them in it. The last judgment is that no skeptic will be convinced by this book just as no believer will be convinced by this review. ●

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Bigfoot: A Personal Inquiry into a Phenomenon. By Kenneth Wylie. Viking Press, New York, 1980. 251 pp., plus bibliography, index, maps, and illustrations, $14.95

Reviewed by John R. Cole

Bigfoot has recently been reported in almost every part of America, and its relatives have been reported on other continents (Asia's Abominable Snowman, or Yeti, is the most famous). Footprints, tufts of hair, droppings, odors, and occasional

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sightings—but no bones or carcasses or clear photos—constitute the ephemeral evidence. Like UFO sightings, Bigfootism seems to be contagious, spread by word of mouth and press reports. Wylie's book opens with a presentation of seemingly inexplicable claims, and the rest of the book documents his patient investigation of them, which resulted in prosaic explanations, verdicts of "hoax," or determinations of insufficient evidence.

Wylie's subtitle is significant. Most of the book chronicles his personal search through the forests and psychologies of Bigfoot country. He hoped to find some positive evidence, but he shows clearly how skepticism is essential to any scientific quest; his treatment of scientific method in contrast to pseudoscience is the most worthwhile part of the book. He is sympathetic with believers, but not with hoaxers. He exposes some of the latter as opportunists looking for profit in human gullibility.

He could not obtain an interview with Ivan T. Sanderson but spoke at length with René Dahinden, Barbara Wasson, and John Green, as well as with Bob Gimlin and Wayne King and with many witnesses. In the process he noted the factionalism and the egos, evasions, jealousies, and confusions that exist among Bigfoot aficionados.

There is a good overview of primate evolution, distribution, behavior, and myth, and the treatment of such things as breeding population and food resource requirements is excellent. Wylie synthesizes historical and scientific studies well and adds notes from his own quest. Besides the main text, there is a good bibliography of important and accessible sources useful to the general reader. The appendices are excellent—they should be in every college and high school library. One is a synthesis of analyses of the famous Patterson-Gimlin film of a supposed Bigfoot; studies by John Napier, Grieve, Bayanov and Bourtsev, and Donskoy, published elsewhere, are reported in detail. Appendix B is an excellent chart-form comparison of Bigfoot "data" and "bionomic factors" applicable to all animals in general, which graphically dissects internal contradictions in data and explores the possible implications.

Wylie is a sympathetic observer who closes his book by comparing the Bigfoot quest to quests for the Holy Grail, wishing romantic pursuers well but stressing a possible human need for unsolved mysteries. Some readers may object at this point, but the author's refusal to condemn people like René Dahinden for wasting their time combines with a well-articulated sense of the nature, method, and uses of science to acknowledge that for some people the lure of democratic "unscience" is a strong one. He exposes Bigfoot charlatanry, humbug, and delusion without attacking the dignity of sincere believers and hopers. ●

Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence. Edited by Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael Ames. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1980. 336 pp. $24.95 (Canadian), hardcover.

Reviewed by Stuart D. Scott, Jr.

If you believe, as some do, that Bigfoot in any of its various forms does not exist in physical reality, a quick first impression of *Manlike Monsters on Trial* might be that it is merely another book on a subject of which there is indeed no positive empirical evidence. The cynical among us will note further that lack of evidence has hardly even slowed the flow of the pen. Such a first impression, however, would be false and unfortunate. This symposium volume, with contributions by twenty-four participants in a 1978 conference on "Sasquatch and Similar Phenomena," is an admirable attempt to review the philosophical and sociological literature bearing on the issue of nonhuman hominids. Essays in Part I, "Monsters in the Forest of the Mind," comment on historical interpretations and psychological understanding of the phenomena of legendary hominid forms. In Part 2, "Manlike Monsters of the Native New World," the Sasquatch concept is examined through the artistic and mythological perceptions of selected North American societies. Part 3, "Contemporary Sasquatch Investigation," deals with analysis and description of "hard" evidence, e.g., hair, feces, footprints, and so on.

Inevitably there is some unevenness in the analytical strength and clarity of the various papers, but on the whole this is an interesting and useful volume of scholarly descriptive research concerned with perspectives that are unlikely to come out of the usual Bigfoot dialogues. Coeditor Halpin aptly remarks (p. 18) that until now Sasquatch investigators have concentrated on the object of experience rather than the experiencing subject, a problem that this book attempts to correct.

The broad-reaching treatment recommends this book especially to those whose view of Sasquatch may tend to be culture bound. In this reviewer's opinion, this important group of papers will serve to advance the discussion of the issue of these elusive creatures considerably, for believers and nonbelievers alike. ●

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Tracking Those Incredible Dinosaurs . . . and the People Who Knew Them. By John D. Morris. Creation-Life Publishers, San Diego, 1980. 238 pp.

Reviewed by Henry P. Zuidema

"Creation is not a scientific theory," Duane T. Gish, associate director of the Institute for Creation Research, told a correspondent recently; and then he added

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the creationist line, "But neither is evolution."

What the ICR is about, he said, is "defending creation on the basis of science and not on the basis of the Bible or any religious literature of any kind." That is, the ICR proposed to use the methods of science in field investigations to substantiate, for example, the historical fact of Noah's flood and an earth history encompassed in a few thousand years, and, in this, to challenge the validity of evolution.

Tracking Those Incredible Dinosaurs, with its intriguing subtitle, is a report of one such enterprise—the investigation of the famous dinosaur trackways in limestone strata of the Cretaceous age being exposed by erosion along the Paluxy River near Glen Rose, Texas. The purpose: to establish that humans and dinosaurs existed together. The author is the son of Henry M. Morris, the director of the ICR. He recently received a Ph.D. in geological engineering at the University of Oklahoma and has, the ICR news bulletin announces, accepted a faculty appointment there for the current year.

Morris summarized his Paluxy fieldwork with the statement that "if one allows the whole body of data to speak for itself, without attempting to harmonize it with preconceived ideas, the conclusion that man and dinosaur walked together at the same time and place—and that both perished in a watery cataclysm—seems inevitable."

Further, in letters recommending the use of a motion picture about the Paluxy tracks, the ICR's associate director states that "all of us on the scientific staff of the Institute believe there is little doubt that the co-existence of human footprints with dinosaur footprints has been fully documented in the Paluxy River area." The book seeks to present this "documentation."

The ICR has attempted such fieldwork before. A few years ago it organized a search for the Ark. It also was led by Morris, who at that time had a B.S. in civil engineering from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where his father, a hydrologist who has written extensively on Flood theory, earlier was chairman of the civil engineering department.

A chief purpose of the expedition, one of many that have been conducted over the years by various groups, is suggested by the requirement that the participants, financed by families and church groups, be literate and fluent in order to better relate their experiences to audiences on their return. The Ark eluded discovery.

An equally challenging task was undertaken by the institute in its investigation of the Bannock overthrust complex in contiguous corners of Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho. Geologically this is an area where rock strata were pushed up along faults and then thrust over and upon other strata, thus causing a doubling up of the rock sequence that is observed in undisturbed regions. To creationists, this was merely an idea conceived by geologists to get around admitting that the "geologic column" does not exist. Here was an opportunity, as the ICR journal suggested, to show that a fossil sequence in the rocks does not occur, and hence evolution theory loses one of its main props.

Meanwhile, major oil companies following up on U.S. Geological Survey data gathered over half a century, hit it rich in both the western (including the Bannock) and the eastern (Appalachian) overthrust belts. Impelled by current energy needs and unfamiliar, it seems, with creationist doubts about the existence of overthrusts, drillers penetrated ancient sterile strata to reach more recent petroliferous rocks, long buried beneath thrust sheets, to reach oil and gas. The geological column still stands.

In its pursuit of the dinosaur-man connection in Texas, the ICR was again

going over well-traveled ground. Few fossil localities have been explored for so long a time as the Paluxy area has. Tons of dinosaur trackways have been removed by museums. Several universities have worked the strata, including some sectarian schools, such as Baylor (Baptist), Southern Methodist, and a group of Seventh Day Adventist colleges.

That other fundamentalists should be critical of such claims as are made in the Morris book is a sensitive issue at the institute. "Baylor studies have been the most extensive," Morris writes, "But, of course, the idea of man prints is ridiculed." The Adventist schools, including California's Loma Linda, studied tracks, including some that had been described as "moccasin imprints," and felt that the case for human occupancy of the area had not been proved.

The ICR actively entered the Paluxy scene in 1975, following interest stimulated by a motion picture made by the Films for Christ Association, an Illinois operation. The filmmakers had been attracted to the area by the writings of Clifford L. Burdick, an adviser on geology for ICR, who had been pursuing evidence of "giant humans" in North America for forty years. He came into possession of "man tracks" and a large cat track, perhaps of a sabre-tooth tiger. which is mentioned by Morris as "reported found in the Glen Rose limestone."

Burdick is not a paleontologist. Specialists at the University of Texas-Austin, who have worked the Glen Rose rocks, believe he may have been hoaxed. Curio shop dealers had earlier been hoaxed when they purchased tracks, some of them fabricated "human footprints," from residents in the area in the 1930s.

While references to the site of the cat-track "discovery" are vague, Morris points out that, since cats are thought to have evolved about 50 million years ago and the Glen Rose strata are dated as at least 100 million years old by geologists, this discovery "is almost as damaging to evolution theory" as are the purported human prints. "One well-documented factual observation," the author says, quoting another creationist writer, "would rob the theory of the huge time spans regarded as the *conditio sine qua non* for evolution to have occurred."

Therein lies the rub. As of this writing, there is not one impression of a human foot, in stone, removed from the Paluxy strata under the precautions observed in such work that has been made available for scientific study. The ICR museum has impressions, but these are plaster casts. Paleontologists require original material for description and identification. There were some rubber pullings taken by the filmmakers, but these, says the ICR, have deteriorated.

Much of the Paluxy trackways locality is state park land, the institute points out, and thus the tracks could not be removed from the exposed limestone without a permit. In 1975, Morris and Edward Blick, an ICR advisory board member and also on the engineering faculty of the University of Oklahoma, were taken on a tour of the area by a Glen Rose chiropractor, Cecil Dougherty, who has been examining the river bed for tracks for many years and who showed them "manlike tracks." These, Morris said, "included perhaps the most perfect track ever found. This recently exposed track was in a most vulnerable position and within a year of its discovery had completely eroded away."

Sedimentologists will be interested in the discovery by Burdick of "incipient metamorphism" with reference to a disputed Glen Rose footprint. Metamorphism is the change in composition of a rock, as limestone into marble, by great pressure, heat, and water, as in mountain-building disturbances.

Burdick seems to believe these enormous pressures could derive from the

weight of a person. Morris quotes Burdick on the examination of a cross-section of the footprint: "The area directly under the foot was white, due to recrystallizing of limestone into white calcite, leaving coloring impurities behind. This recrystallization was apparently due to the pressure from above, that is, the weight of a man."

Drawing on Noah's flood as a factor in the formation of the Glen Rose strata, Morris comments that "catastrophism is a relatively new conceptual framework for science ... and very few investigators with geologic knowledge have tried to interpret specific geologic data from this perspective." He thus ignores one of the great controversies of more than two centuries ago, which ended in the collapse of catastrophism as a useful concept in the interpretation of geologic events.

That this book will survive as one of the more curious documents of our era and have a place beside George Price's *New Geology*, a book that has been termed "a classic example of pseudoscience," on collectors' shelves is assured by the author's explanation of why dinosaur and human footprints ought to be found together in Texas:

> The conclusion seems to be justified that the Llano Uplift was one of the last areas to be permanently inundated by the flood. Certainly during the first weeks of the flood, as torrential rains poured down, as waters rose, as the earth shifted, and as areas flooded, men and the more mobile animals would have sought the highest ground for safety, which in this region would have been this great rock mass.
>
> Animals of various sorts, friends and former enemies alike, would have rushed about in near panic looking for permanent safety. Perhaps the men built rafts in a futile effort to save themselves.
>
> A temporary lowering of the water level ... would have exposed some of the recently deposited sediments. In their frantic search for safety, many animals left the uplift only to find that the waters returned, even higher than before.
>
> A map of the numerous dinosaur-track locations in the Glen Rose limestone indicates that the dinosaurs plodded off in all directions, leaving their footprints in the fresh sediments as they went.

Morris pursues his argument further:

> Since the Bible indicates that dinosaurs lived before the Flood of Noah [Morris here suggests that "the fossil remains of certain dinosaurs" fit the "behemoth" and "leviathan" of Scripture] and likewise had contact with men after the Flood, as in the case of Job, it stands to reason that some of them may have survived the watery catastrophe.
>
> Perhaps those who were more agile in the water were able to swim through the turmoil, at least in representative numbers, but that does not solve the problem of the land dinosaurs. It may be that Noah took members of the land kinds on board the Ark ... He did not have to take adult animals, and indeed probably would have taken younger, more virile, and therefore smaller, individuals on board, those more likely to reproduce when the Flood was over. It is also possible that he took dinosaur eggs on the Ark, eliminating the need for so much food and space.

As a facet of the socio-political ferment inherent in the evangelical resurgence of the past two decades, the ICR becomes a legitimate object of public scrutiny. Its preoccupation with public education and its campaign to have special creation taught when evolution is presented are, moreover, much in the public eye.

In view of all this, the ICR might well stick to its real mission—to save the world from "Darwinism"—and get out of field research, which is filled with booby

traps for the believer and which to date has turned up nothing for the ICR that its followers had not accepted all along.

When its staff lifts its eyes to the mountains with the intent to prove the "scientific" truth of Scripture, it would be well to avoid some pitfalls by taking along a Brunton transit, a plane table, and a good rock hammer. ●

Some Recent Books

Listing here does not preclude a more detailed review in a future issue.

Berry, Adrian. *From Apes to Astronauts.* London: The Daily Telegraph, 1981, 182 pp., paper, £1.45. Collection of science journalist's newspaper columns includes sections on evolution and on pseudoscience.

Burnam, Tom. *More Misinformation.* New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1981, 243 pp., $11.95. A new collection of fables, fallacies, and fictions. In this lively sequel to his *Dictionary of Misinformation* (1975), Burnam once again shows that the debunking of commonly accepted misconceptions of all kinds can be entertaining as well as informative.

Houdini. *Miracle Mongers and Their Methods: A Complete Exposé.* Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1981, 241 pp., $13.95. Welcome reprint of Houdini's 1921 book on fire-eaters, sword-swallowers, stone-eaters, reptile-handlers, and other performers of skill and daring. Foreword by The Amazing Randi.

Pasachoff, Jay M. *Contemporary Astronomy*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1981. 603 pp. New edition of popular textbook is a good example of several leading texts that openly address astronomy-related pseudosciences with concise but excellent sections on astrology and UFOs.

Planer, Felix E. *Superstition.* Cassell Ltd., 35 Red Lion Square, London. 1980, 376 pp., £9.95. A detailed critical study of superstition in its many forms, including prognostications, the spirit world, magic (including voodoo, faith healing, and psychokinesis), and religion. The author defines superstition as "a belief affording the relief of an anxiety by means of an irrational notion."

Rood, Robert T., and James S. Trefil. *Are We Alone?* New York: Scribner's, 1981. 256 pp., $14.95. For those who have wanted a more skeptical scientific approach to the subject of possible extraterrestrial intelligence, this book, by two University of Virginia scientists, is it.

The following booklet has come to our attention:

Before You Hire a "Water Witch." National Water Well Association, 500 W. Wilson Bridge Road, Worthington, Ohio 53085, 12 pp. 50 cents. Clear nononsense answers to frequently asked questions about dowsing.

—*K.F.*

Articles of Note

Broad, William J. "Creationists Limit Scope of Evolution Case." *Science* 211:1331-32, March 20, 1981. Report on the trial of the creationist suit in a California superior court. Letters commenting on the case are in 212:737-38.

Broad, William J. "Fraud and the Structure of Science." *Science* 212:137-41, April 10, 1981. Discussion of the issues raised by several new cases of pirating of papers and falsification of data that have come to light in biomedical science recently. For later important articles on the same subject see Susan Lawrence, "Watching the Watchers," *Science News* 119:331-33, May 23, 1981, and Lewis Thomas, "Falsity and Failure," *Discover*, June 1981, pp. 38-39.

Cowen, Robert. "Creationism in the Classroom." *Technology Review*, July 1981, pp. 8-9. More on the anti-evolution campaign.

FitzGerald, Frances. "The Reverend Jerry Falwell." *New Yorker*, May 18, 1981, pp. 53-141. Excellent detailed examination of the fundamentalist television evangelist.

Frazier, Kendrick. "Miracle Mongers and the Gullible." *Baltimore Sun*, April 28, 1981, p. A17. Editorial column explores how willingness to believe in psychic wonders helped the news and entertainment media to become such easy prey for the Tamara Rand hoax.

Godfrey, Laurie R. "The Flood of Antievolutionism." *Natural History*, June 1981, pp. 4-10. Report on the distortions of the "scientific creationists," whose political propaganda "may be poor science, but ... powerful politics."

Gould, Stephen Jay. "Evolution as Fact and Theory." *Discover*, May 1981, pp. 34-37. Excellent essay forthrightly responding to the distortions of the creationists. Emphasizes that the recent debates among evolutionists are only about the mechanisms of evolution, not the fact that evolution occurred. "Evolution is one of the half-dozen 'great ideas' developed by science.... Shall we deprive millions of this knowledge and once again teach biology as a set of dull and unconnected facts, without the thread that weaves diverse material into a supple unity?"

Gould, Stephen Jay. "Piltdown in Letters." *Natural History*, June 1981, pp. 12-30. In response to Gould's August 1980 article presenting a strong case for the active participation of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in the famed Piltdown man hoax, three paleontologists formerly associated with the French priest/paleontologist rally to his defense. Gould then responds in detail, adding still more circumstantial evidence of Teilhard's involvement.

Greenwell, J. Richard, and James E. King. "Attitudes of Physical Anthropologists Toward Reports of Bigfoot and Nessie." *Current Anthropology* 22(1):79-80, February 1981. See News and Comment in this issue.

"Hard to Digest," *Discover*, July 1981, p. 9. Skeptical Eye column criticizes the article "ESP: New Scientific Evidence" in May *Reader's Digest*.

Hyman, Ray. "Dr. Hyman protests ..." *Parapsychology Review*, March-April 1981, pp. 25-26. Response by Ray Hyman concerning misconceptions about CSICOP, Hansel, Hyman, and the APS symposium on physics and parapsychology promulgated in an earlier essay/review by Theodore Rockwell. Followed by a response from Rockwell.

Kelly, Ivan. "Cosmobiology and Moon Madness." *Mercury* (Astronomical Society

of the Pacific), January-February 1981, pp. 13ff. Second and final installment of Kelly's "The Scientific Case Against Astrology" examines the astrobiology claims of the Gauquelins and the claims of lunar influences on behavior.

Lyon, Jeff. "Skeptical Scientists Band Together to Say Pshaw to the Psychic Crowd." *Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 1981, Tempo section, pp. 1-2. Lengthy article on CSICOP, its goals, activities, and critics.

MacDougall, Curtis D. "If You Are Dedicated to Truth You Don't Ballyhoo Superstition." *Chicago Lawyer*, December 1980. Respected journalism teacher criticizes the media attention given to year-end forecasts of "astrologers, soothsayers, fortune tellers, clairvoyants and all manner of other psychics."

Oberg, James. "Hoaxes" (UFO Update column). *Omni*, July 1981, pp. 32 ff. Lengthy examination of the many hoaxes credulous pro-UFO investigators have fallen for.

"A Psychic Watergate." *Discover*, June 1981, p. 8. Skeptical Eye column focuses on the Tamara Rand hoax.

Russell, Kathlyn. "Elisabeth Kubler-Ross." Escondido, Calif., *Times-Advocate*, April 26, 1981, pp. 1, 6 and 7. Five detailed articles. One on criticisms of Kubler-Ross is headlined "'No Better Than a $25-an-Hour Rent-a-Spook,'" a characterization by a former associate, referring to the notorious group workshops with Kubler-Ross and "psychic medium" Jay Barham.

Seligson, Marcia. "Interview with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross." *Playboy*, May 1981, pp. 69 ff. See Psychic Vibrations, this issue.

Stanford, Dennis. "Who's On First?" *Science 81*, June 1981, pp. 92 ff. Smithsonian anthropologist critically reviews Jeffrey Goodman's latest book of fringe science, *American Genesis*, which contends that fully modern man originated in the New World and then spread to the Old World. "I found the arguments ... convoluted and unconvincing," concludes Stanford. "I cannot recommend it for any serious reading. ... Publishers who do not subject such works to proper academic prepublication reviews are, in my opinion, not doing their jobs."

—*K.F.*

From Our Readers

The letters column is a forum for views on matters raised in previous issues. Letters are welcome and are more likely to be published if they are typed and double-spaced. Some may have to be edited.

Schmidt's PK experiments

Somewhat like reader Mortimer Cohen (Letters, *SI*, Spring 1981), I am dismayed at the deference with which Professor Hyman treats parapsychologists (see "Further Comments on Schmidt's PK Experiments," *SI*, Spring 1981). From a purely scientific standpoint, if it's true that Schmidt doesn't allow access to his raw data and doesn't allow any monitoring of experiments in progress, that should settle the matter right there; the man's work doesn't deserve further consideration while such conditions obtain.

Hyman apparently hopes that procedures can be improved and thinks that the work is worthy of consideration on other grounds: namely, the ingenuity of Schmidt's approach and the apparatus that embodies that approach. Fair enough. Getting down to specifics, so far as the automatic recording of results is concerned, Hyman would probably concede that this feature of the apparatus, while valuable, is scarcely new in parapsychological research. The real admirability must lie elsewhere. It must lie in what Hyman calls "a new level of sophistication regarding randomization of targets." But apparently this new level of sophistication isn't sufficiently high to allay Hyman's worries about the randomness of numbers outputted. He worries about short-run biases, about the deficiencies in Schmidt's own tests for bias, and, finally, about the fact that the complexity of Schmidt's RNG only increases such difficulties. He concludes that it may take years to learn the propensities of, and to wring out the bugs in, the new apparatus.

The question arises, If an RNG is going to cause all that trouble, why use it at all? Certainly not just to get random numbers. The latter can be purchased over the counter in the form of tables that have been checked and rechecked by all known tests. They are readily transcribed onto floppy discs and served up to experimenters automatically, just as if generated on the spot.

It would seem that the RNG, per se, confers no advantages, only disadvantages. The real merit, if any, can only lie, then, in the concept of using subatomic events as the physical events to be influenced by the will of the experimental subjects. Superficially, this looks like a great idea. Why not see if the mind can't influence atomic radiation analogously to the way heat influences Brownonian movement?

But one has to examine *just how it is that any such power of mind is asked*

to manifest itself in the present instance. Bear in mind that the only way random impulses can be made to figuratively flip a coin is to match said impulses against time-related signals generated within the apparatus employed for the purpose; the relative timing between input and internal signals determining whether "heads" or "tails" comes up. But the particular apparatus program is arbitrarily determined by the designer. Theoretically, it could be any of an infinite number of programs whose timing is confined within a practicable continuum.

So when the subject wills one indicator light to extinguish in favor of another, what he is really asking his PK force (or whatever the agency is called) to do is this: first, to "know" or otherwise take cognizance of the particular program that happens to be employed by the apparatus involved; second, to "know" before it happens that a fission event is about to take place in the radioactive material so as to be able to; third, reach in among billions of atoms to the single appropriate nucleus, and there: fourth, to advance or retard the event, as dictated by the knowledge of the apparatus program, precisely so as to favor the outputting of one of two digits over the other.

John Lord, writing in the same issue, urges the cultivating and heeding of a "sense of the ridiculous." For him, claims are automatically discredited if they hinge upon such things as directions emanating from computers in flying saucers. Such a basis is ridiculous, of course. However, in any implausibility sweepstakes it would be left at the starting gate by the scenario I have just outlined.

But let us say that one's sense of the ridiculous is not triggered, for one reason or another, by implausibility alone. Then how about by ludicrousness? For there is still here the matter of inverse results, such as those allegedly incurred by subject R.R. Consider the scene: the poor guy sits there determinedly willing the lights to progress clockwise. Instead, they perversely go counterclockwise often enough to be enormously significant. What, specifically, is it that thwarts poor R.R.? Does he have an unfortunate kink, perhaps congenital, in his psi? Something that inverts it in the few feet between him and the radioactive material? Or is there, instead, some willful demon within said material that resolves, "I don't like this subject, so I'm going to do the opposite of what he wants!"?

These questions are legitimate. It's not like in the testing of a new drug where you know immediately the significance of a below-chance score. There it means only that the drug is harming, not helping, the subjects. Here, the meaning is not defined.

Hyman accuses Hansel of making an unduly summary judgment on Schmidt, in that Hansel considers only such things as procedures and safeguards and shows no interest in Hyman's conviction that "something important is probably taking place." In view of considerations such as those just cited, Hansel could well reply that no responsible investigator would lend credence to such a conviction!

Warner Clements
Beverly Hills, Calif.

I regret that Professor Hansel, ["A Historical Analysis. . ." (Spring 1981)], such a valued colleague over the years in the pursuit of rationality, persists in overemphasizing the tendency of parascientists to cheat in obtaining their results, though we are presented with startling examples of this frequently enough. His efforts to invoke a strong suspicion of Helmut Schmidt's work being the result of trickery does not seem called for at all. In agreement with Dr. Hyman, I believe that if the Schmidt research is eventually faulted, it will be on the grounds of improper protocol, not cheating. There are reasons to suspect that Schmidt has fallen into that trap of "improper but nondeliber-

ate manipulation of data" that Hyman suggests, but I see no evidence for trickery on the part of Schmidt. Nor do I find the possibility of physical interference with the instrumental setup to be a likely one.

Professor Hansel, in his criticisms of parapsychology, tends to lean rather too heavily on technical, rather than psychological, interference. His *ESP and Parapsychology: A Critical Reevaluation*, while obviously a useful and recommended book, is flawed in this direction. An example is his commentary concerning the Eisenbud/Serios tests, which are doomed for other reasons than the somewhat naive modus operandi postulated by Hansel.

Though I risk offending Hansel in making these comments, I feel I must do so, to preserve a hard-won integrity for the skeptics. When Professor Hansel suggests that "when analyzing an experiment it is wise *initially* to adopt the assumption that ESP ... is impossible," I must join with Hyman in strongly disagreeing. To allow such a comment to stand as a criterion of CSICOP would provoke justifiable objections from the psientists. As Hyman says, Hansel's attitude in this respect is at odds with science and the scientific method.

James Randi
Rumson, N.J.

Tides of pseudoscience

There are still many people who feel folks like us are wasting our time speaking to people about the harmful effects of believing in psychic powers, which have not been shown to exist. Randi reminds folks that the ability to suspend disbelief and to put trust in nonverifiable psychic events was a primary force behind the Jonestown tragedy. I think there is a great deal of truth in that statement.

The debate between science and religion is prevalent again, with the new trial of Darwin. I think the most revealing information to date about the differences between the biblical account of creation and the scientific account can be found in Isaac Asimov's new book, *In the Beginning ...*, which I highly recommend. *Time*, March 16, 1981, summed up its article on the controversy with the following paragraph, which ties in with Randi's concern about the deleterious effects of blind beliefs.

> Some scientists and science educators are beginning to blame themselves for the present popularity of pseudoscience—including astrology and medical quackery, as well as the "science" of creationism. Says Wayne Moyer, executive directory of the National Association of Biology Teachers: "We have done a botched job of teaching evolutionary theory, and we had better accept the creationist challenge to clean up our act." Adds chemist Russell Doolittle: "At first I couldn't understand the gullibility of people. It took me a while to understand that the average American is not equipped to combat this sort of thing. The tragedy of it all is the state of science education in the country—it's simply, sadly, awful."

Indeed, while some might argue that creationism is popular today due to the political shift to the Right, a more proper argument is that many people just have not learned how to think. We are assaulted daily with easy answers, easy slogans, fortune tellers, and pseudoscientists telling us that there is no need for thought, study, fine experimental design, or careful reasoning. It is not just that science education is poor. It is not just the educational system. It is the fact that we have thrown out our mental powers, our ability to reason. When we reclaim that (dare I say it?) God-given right, we will be well on our way to a more sane and progressive society.

Abe Carnow
Los Angeles, Calif.

Courses on credulity

I am currently designing a course to be offered in Spring 1982 at the senior/graduate level, dealing with credulity, pseudoscience, and the occult in American culture. I am writing to ask if those who have taught such courses would care to share any of their materials/experiences with me—to help avoid as many "shakedown cruise" pitfalls as possible.

Donald J. Metzger
Assoc. Prof. of Anthropology
Department of Sociology
University of Akron
Akron, O. 44325

Extraterrestrial ancestors?

*The following letter, a response to "Tiptoeing Beyond Darwin" by Richard Greenwell (*SI, *Spring 1980), is by one of the writers whose work was criticized in the article. The author of the article then responds.*—ED.

First, let me thank J. Richard Greenwell for the criticism. Science cannot advance without criticism.

Second, let me admit to a virtually unforgivable error—our failure to detect (in proofreading) that Fawcett, in editing our book, took out the part that clarifies our position regarding the precise relationship existing between the several great apes and man.

We are ape-related. No one can deny that. But we are ape relatives with vast differences. These differences may come from extraterrestrials.

Please consider: Greenwell, as is certainly his privilege, ignored certain questions we raised in our book. Since he has caused us some sleepless nights, may we now contribute to his insomnia?

1. "The human brain is the greatest mystery known to modern science"—Loren Eisley. Why didn't any other land-dwelling species develop "this gigantic mushroom of a brain"? (No other land species simultaneously developed fetalization at the time that man's brain expanded so enormously.)

2. Why did Boskop man in Africa (1650 cc brain size!) die out?

3. Where did Cro-Magnon man come from? Why didn't any other species show any change during the Neanderthal–Cro-Magnon transition?

4. What caused the 125 hitherto unknown species found by Leakey at the level of a famous find in Olduvai Gorge to occur? (Included was a sheep as big as a modern-day cow!) Were these evidences of unsuccessful hybridization experiments?

5. Why does only man lack a baculum (penis bone)?

6. Why can only man grow 18-foot-long head-hair (among all the living great apes)?

7. Why does only man, among living primates, display the hair patterns of aquatic animals?

8. Why does human-type genius arise only in mankind?

9. We find that all of these things integrate easily into our theory. Last, can Greenwell, with his explanations for these anomalies, provide integration *superior* to ours?

Max Flindt
Los Altos, Calif.

Richard Greenwell responds:

I regret that the publisher of Mankind—Child of the Stars *omitted the authors' clarification of their position on man's relationship to the apes. I have not seen such a clarification, nor can I imagine what it could say that would differ substantially from what was published in the book.*

In my original article, I raised a series of problems with these kinds of theories (that man is a result of interbreeding with, or genetic manipulation by, extraterrestrial beings). I also described many features shared by man and apes so fundamental that a close

relationship seems irrefutable. Mr. Flindt has not addressed these critical points. Instead, he now presents nine additional questions of his own for me to respond to. While these questions are very interesting in themselves, even if some of them are of doubtful relevance, I feel that the burden is not on me to respond to them, particularly when my own points have not been addressed by Mr. Flindt.

Before some readers snicker at Mr. Flindt, I would like to point out that professional scientists themselves have sometimes advanced theories on man's origins that are totally out of step with most *of the available evidence. Just two years after Darwin published* The Descent of Man, *zoologist St. George Mivart attributed man/ape similarities to parallel evolution and contended that no real morphological affinities were involved. In 1921, M. Boule, the well-known French paleontologist, discussed body extremity differences in man and apes and concluded that we were more closely related to Old World monkeys, or even to the joint Old World/New World monkey stock.*

In 1929, anatomist F. Wood Jones, believing that primates were too "specialized" to have given rise to hominids, went so far as to claim that Homo *derived directly from the primitive tarsoid (a pro-simian), meaning that we would not be related to* any *apes* or *monkeys. And, as recently as 1949, anatomist William Strauss also used selective data to support his view that hominids descended from the Old World monkeys prior to the existence of the apes, sometime between 32 and 50 million years ago. So Mr. Flindt is even in the company of some distinguished professional scientists in proposing scenarios that conflict with most of the fossil, morphological, physiological, genetic, and behavioral data.*

My original article reviewing works on the hybrid and transplant hypotheses concluded that "no evidence that can survive critical scrutiny has so far been presented to support the hypothesis of man's partial or total extraterrestrial origin." I see no reason to change that conclusion. If such evidence were produced (but evidence, *not questions), I could possibly be swayed by it. In the meantime, Mr. Flindt can rest assured that his unanswered questions will not "contribute to my insomnia." I am sorry to learn that I caused* him *some sleepless nights!*

An earlier Enquirer "test"

I was interested in the article concerning the *National Enquirer* astrology study in the Winter 1980-81 SKEPTICAL INQUIRER by Mechler et al., but I noticed that the authors did not accuse the editors of that newspaper of deliberate falsehood. As a contribution to settling this question, I would like to tell you of some correspondence I had with Dr. Leo Katz (now deceased) in 1976.

The *National Enquirer* published an article on October 14, 1975, about an exploit of Uri Geller's that was described as "the most spectacular ESP experiment ever." Readers had been asked in an earlier issue to send in their guess of a two-digit number Geller would "transmit" at 5:25 P.M., EDT, August 30, 1975. The number turned out to be "57," and supposedly 308 of 4,041 respondents got it right. The article also claimed that a higher percentage of the respondents correctly determined two objects Geller had drawn during the same experiment.

The article said: "Leo Katz, executive director of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, ... told the *Enquirer*: 'I'm completely astonished by these results. The odds against so many people getting the drawings correct are astronomical. It is truly astounding.'"

On January 2, 1976, I wrote to Dr. Katz at the University of Michigan, enclosing a copy of the article: "I notice that people were asked to make their guess of a number, or received a

telepathic signal, at 5:25 P.M. This is a time that would tend to put the number 57 into the minds of a certain fraction of the people."

Katz replied on January 16, 1976, as follows:

> You are correct; I was not quoted as I responded to the man who phoned me twice from Florida. On the contrary, I said almost exactly the opposite. In my comments, I pointed out that most respondents do not believe (1) that numbers like 0*x*, *x*0, 9*x*, 69 or *zz* are at all random, (2) that even numbers are very random, (3) that numbers with any even digits are as random as those with both odd, and in addition, might have other similar hangups. I expressed preference for 57 or 69, having obvious connotations.
>
> With respect to the pictures, I professed neither I nor anyone I knew of had information on the likelihood of selection of one or another object being doodled. Further, I could make no guess on the reason for the relative frequency of two correct picks exceeding the product of frequencies of the two separately except for the known fact that people differ, thus producing the observed result due to a mixing phenomenon.
>
> My offer to perform the same experiment myself in the course of an expense-paid flight to Bermuda was declined.

The article in the *National Enquirer* was by-lined Dick Saxty. I do not know of course whether he was fully responsible for what was printed. For all I know the "misleading" statements were introduced by someone else on the staff of the *National Enquirer.*

I. J. Good
Univ. Disting. Prof. of Statistics
Virginia Polytech and State Univ.
Blacksburg, Va.

Science and supernaturalism

A year or more ago Robert Jastrow was introduced by talk-show host Merv Griffin as "the world's greatest astronomer." This gratuitous encomium moved me to write the following: "Astronomer Jastrow has prostituted himself once more, this time by the mere title of his book *God and the Astronomers.* What comfort this must give the Holy Rollers to learn that astronomers recognize their god Yahweh. Of course if they look inside and discover that Jastrow confused God and physical force—but the Biblicists won't read beyond the title . . . Jastrow's forte is linguistic confusion."

In his "Science and the Mountain Peak" (*SI*, Winter 1980-81), in which he comments on Jastrow's book, Isaac Asimov elucidates an aspect of the incompatibility of science and religion. It is refreshing to rediscover what H. L. Mencken had to say on this irreconcilable conflict in his controversial *Treatise on the Gods*, published in 1930: "To argue that the gaps in knowledge which still confront the seeker must be filled, not by patient inquiry, but by intuition or revelation, is simply to give ignorance a gratuitous and preposterous dignity. When a man so indulges himself it is only to confess that, to that extent at least, he is not a scientist at all, but a theologian. This is precisely what Millikan, Eddington and their like come to. They reconcile science and religion by the sorry device of admitting, however cautiously, that the latter is somehow superior to the former, and is thus entitled to all territories that remain unoccupied. All they really prove is that a man may be a competent astronomer or physicist and yet no scientist, just as Blind Tom was a competent pianist without being a musician."

Theologians and scientists alike would do well to read all 63 pages of Chapter 5 of Mencken's *Treatise.* To Asimov's credit, he has severed the umbilical cord that binds the booboisie to its ancestral gods. Jastrow, by contrast, is unable to rid himself of his inherited belief in the supernatural. The true scientist believes, with John Dewey, that "the method we term

'scientific' is the sole authentic mode of revelation."

William H. Fink
Emeritus Professor of Economics
The University of Arizona
Tucson, Ariz.

Fact or fiction on TV?

Because of the latest mixture of science and pseudoscience to appear on national television in the form of "That's Incredible." I don't see how I can afford not to continue to subscribe to the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER. I used to feel that television presentations of science fact mixed with science fiction were harmless and provided a great form of escape; but the public is being bombarded with more and more of these programs, and conversations tell me that many people are becoming less and less able to distinguish between the two.

Denise Baulanger
A.P.O., New York

Tactics against creationists

I disagree with letter-writer Clyde O. Davis that the best way of getting the Judeo-Christian creation myth out of the public school biology textbooks is through the Supreme Court (*SI*, Winter 1980-81).

A much more potent weapon is ridicule, as the last generation discovered during the infamous "Monkey Trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925. Although the creationists won a *court* victory, the resultant publicity and discussion, coupled with the ridicule of some of the preposterous claims of the creationists, came close to killing the power the creationists held over the state legislatures.

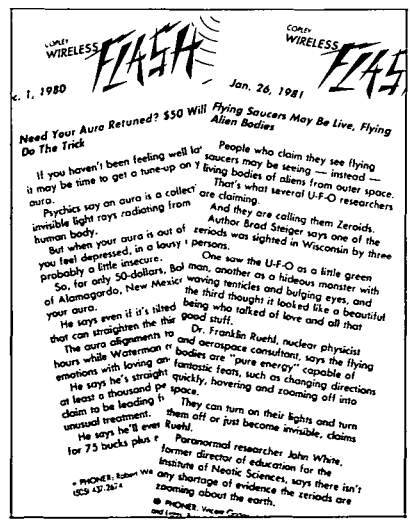
While normally one should not ridicule the religious beliefs of others, the creationists make the tactical error of taking off the surplice of religion and donning the toga of the forum, thereby doffing the armor of religion and opening up their dogma to political debate. Once they do that, they are fair game, just as is any Republican or Democrat.

The most curious thing about the creationists is that, while they pretend to speak for God, they seem to say that God is a heretic who should be damned in the fires of Hell for creating the universe contrary to their announced doctrine. It was the realization of this last statement that made the Catholics drop their dogma that the earth was the center of the solar system and that the sun rotated about the earth.

Lybrand P. Smith
Torrance, Calif.

Radio and psychic yahoos

I have sent my check for another year of your great publication. Let me say that I strongly disagree with the recent criticisms of Randi's approach to debunking. These psychic yahoos deserve both barrels. Anything short of that is just academic.


WIRELESS FLASH
WIRELESS FLASH
Jan. 26, 1981
Need Your Aura Retuned? $50 Will Do The Trick
Flying Saucers May Be Live, Flying Alien Bodies

As a radio talk-show host, I receive some interesting material. I have gathered a good quarter-pound of assorted hogwash and enclose samples of some flashes that are sent to radio stations. [See inset.]

I have talked to most of these jokers, and, believe me, the acerbic, sarcastic approach of investigators like Randi is the only way to get the point across to the public. Keep up the fine work.

Bruce Jones
Columbia, Mo.

Valuable tool

While I was sharing the Winter 1980-81 issue of *SI* with my high-school science classes, several of my students raised the same question concerning your report on Jeane Dixon's upcoming astrology book for cats: Will she be doing calculations for all nine lives?

Seriously, I have found *SI* to be a valuable tool in combatting sloppy thinking among my students. Your subscription department should see to it that every science teacher knows of *SI*'s potential.

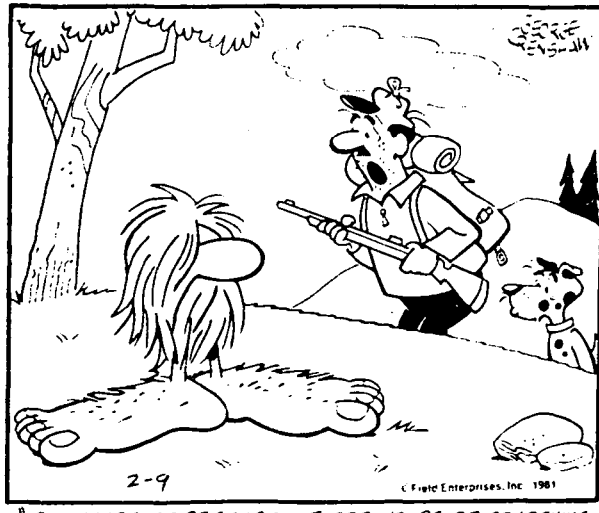
Jon Schwartz
West Hartford, Conn.

Schools and scrutiny

As an educator and former elementary school principal, I especially appreciated Mazurek and Titley's "Teaching Critical Thinking" (*SI*, Winter, 1980-81).

I have seen first-hand the ready and unquestioned acceptance of the reality of UFOs, Bigfoot, the Bermuda Triangle, etc. While much of this, I feel, is due to media hype, blame must also be placed on schools that do not encourage cautious scrutiny of such claims.

Paul M. Schmidt
Bedford Heights, O.



"SIX YEARS OF RESEARCH, THREE YEARS OF SEARCHING AND TRACKING, AND THIS IS BIGFOOT?"

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal

Paul Kurtz, Chairman

Scientific and Technical Consultants

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The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal attempts to encourage the critical investigation of paranormal and fringe-science claims from a responsible, scientific point of view and to disseminate factual information about the results of such inquiries to the scientific community and the public. To carry out these objectives the Committee:

- Maintains a network of people interested in critically examining claims of the paranormal.
- Prepares bibliographies of published materials that carefully examine such claims.
- Encourages and commissions research by objective and impartial inquirers in areas where it is needed.
- Convenes conferences and meetings.
- Publishes articles, monographs, and books that examine claims of the paranormal.
- Does not reject claims on a priori grounds, antecedent to inquiry, but rather examines them objectively and carefully.

The Committee is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization. The SKEPTICAL INQUIRER is its official journal.